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THE NEW YORKER

MAR. 3, 2003

NEW YORK POST
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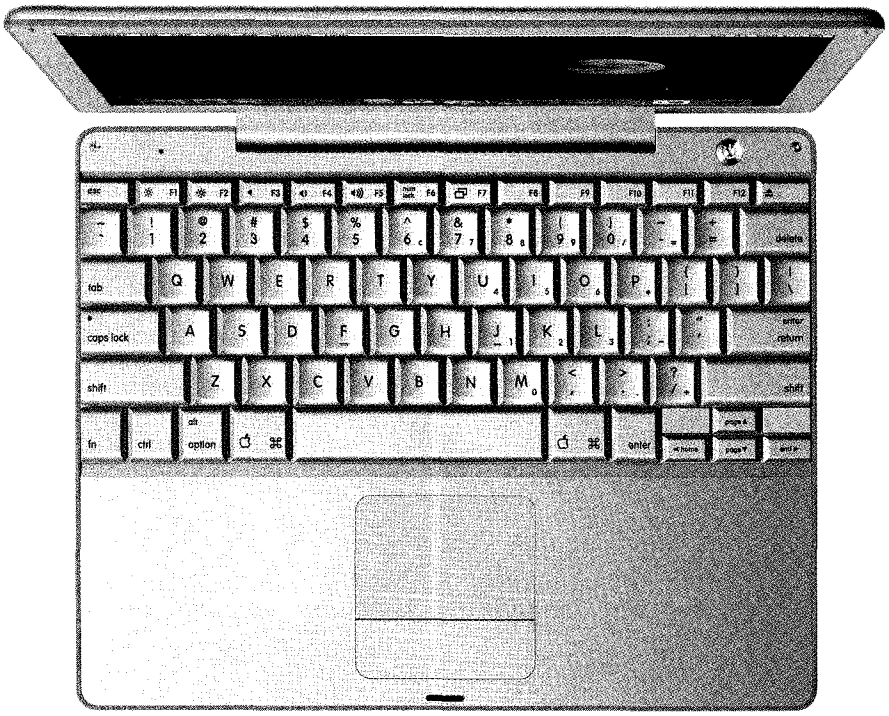

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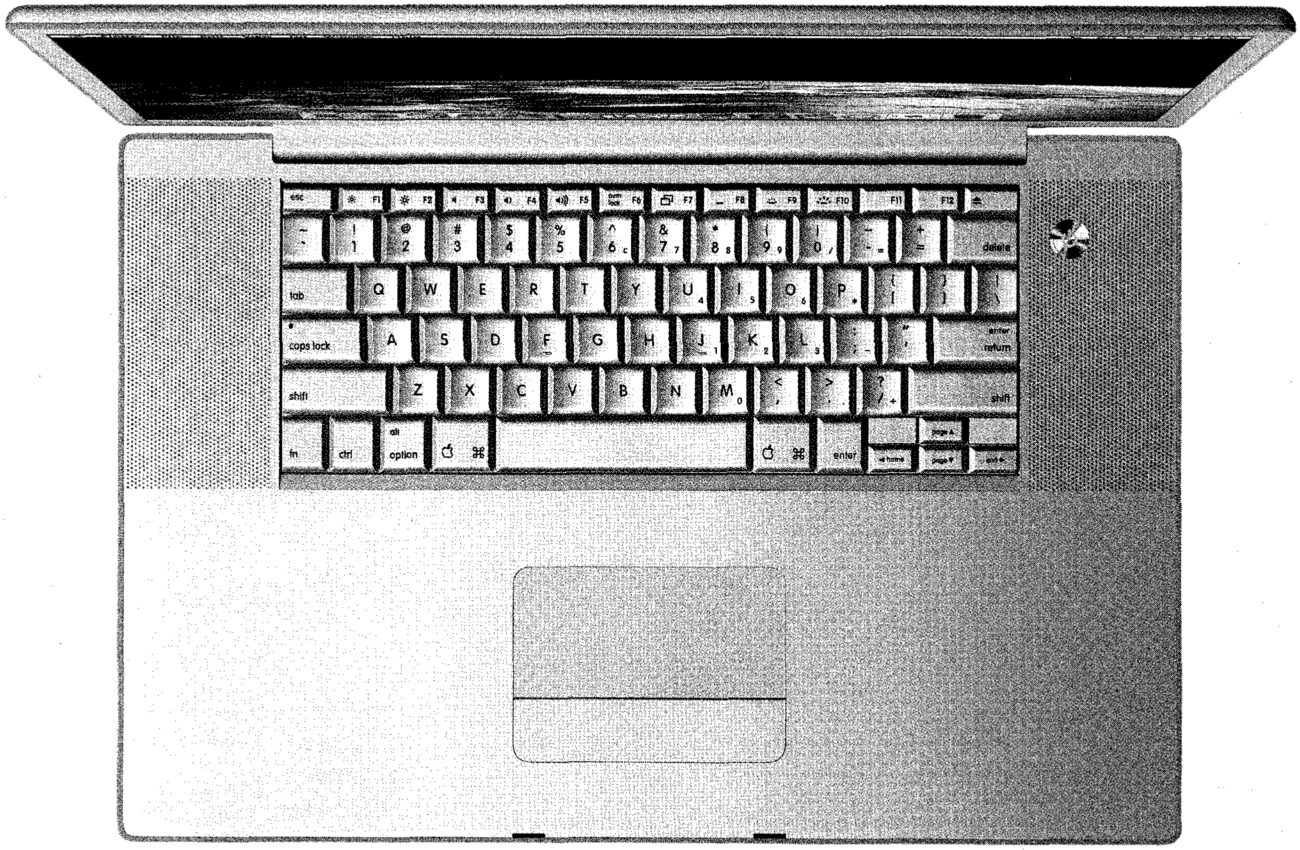

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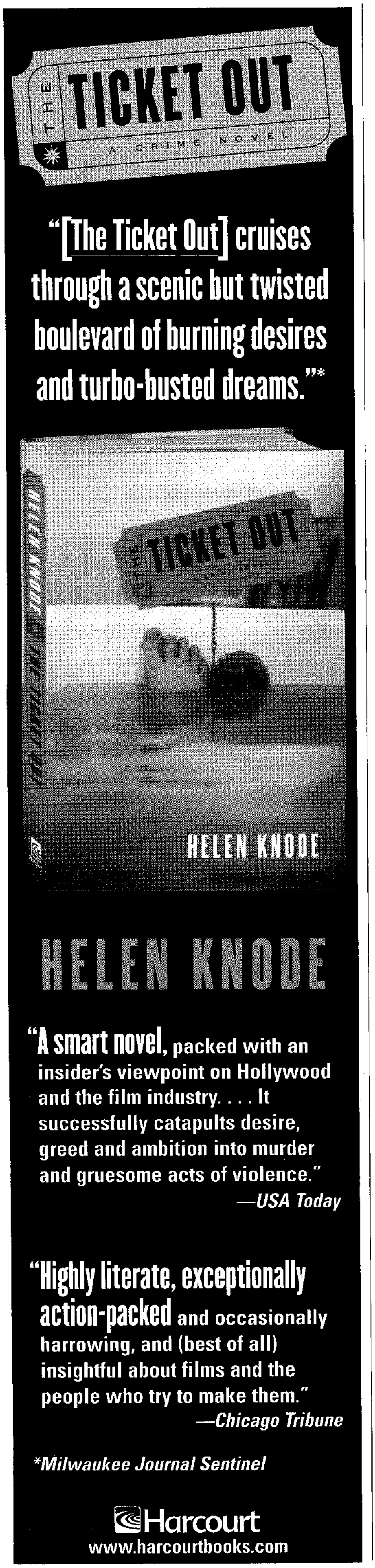
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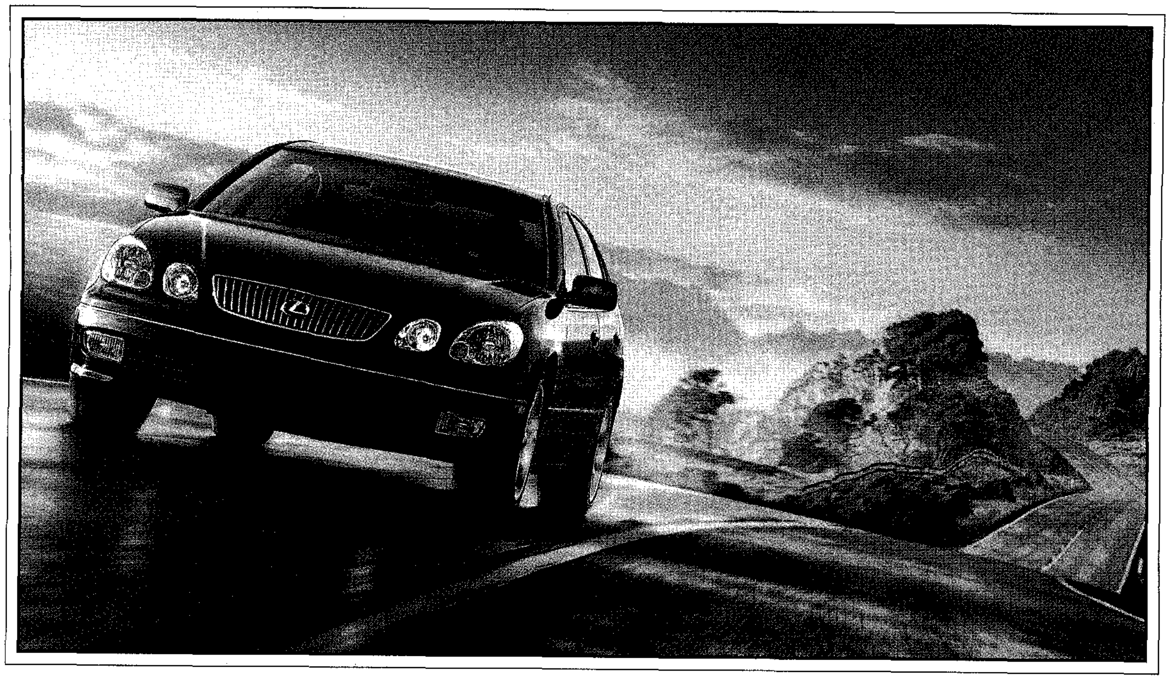

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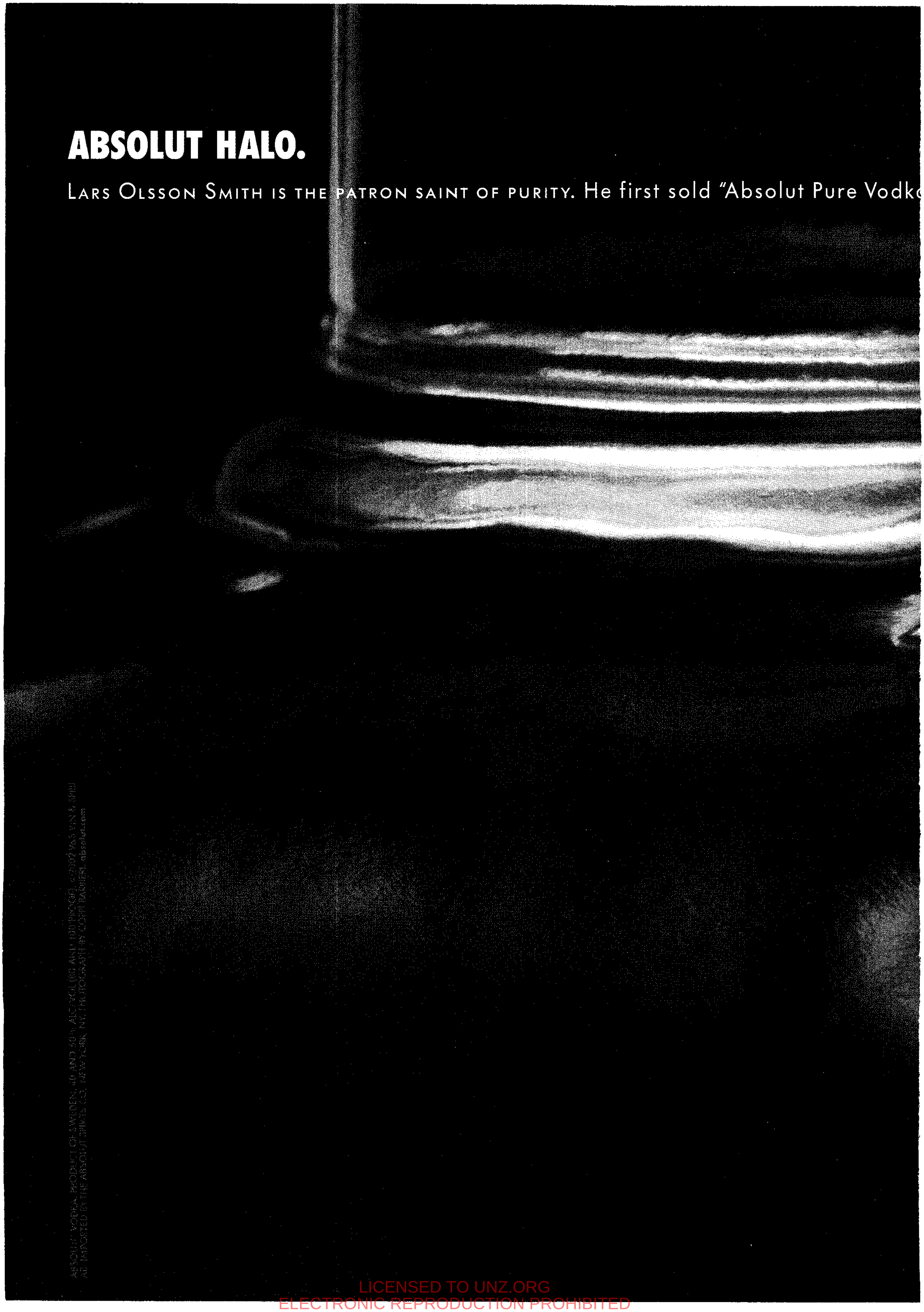
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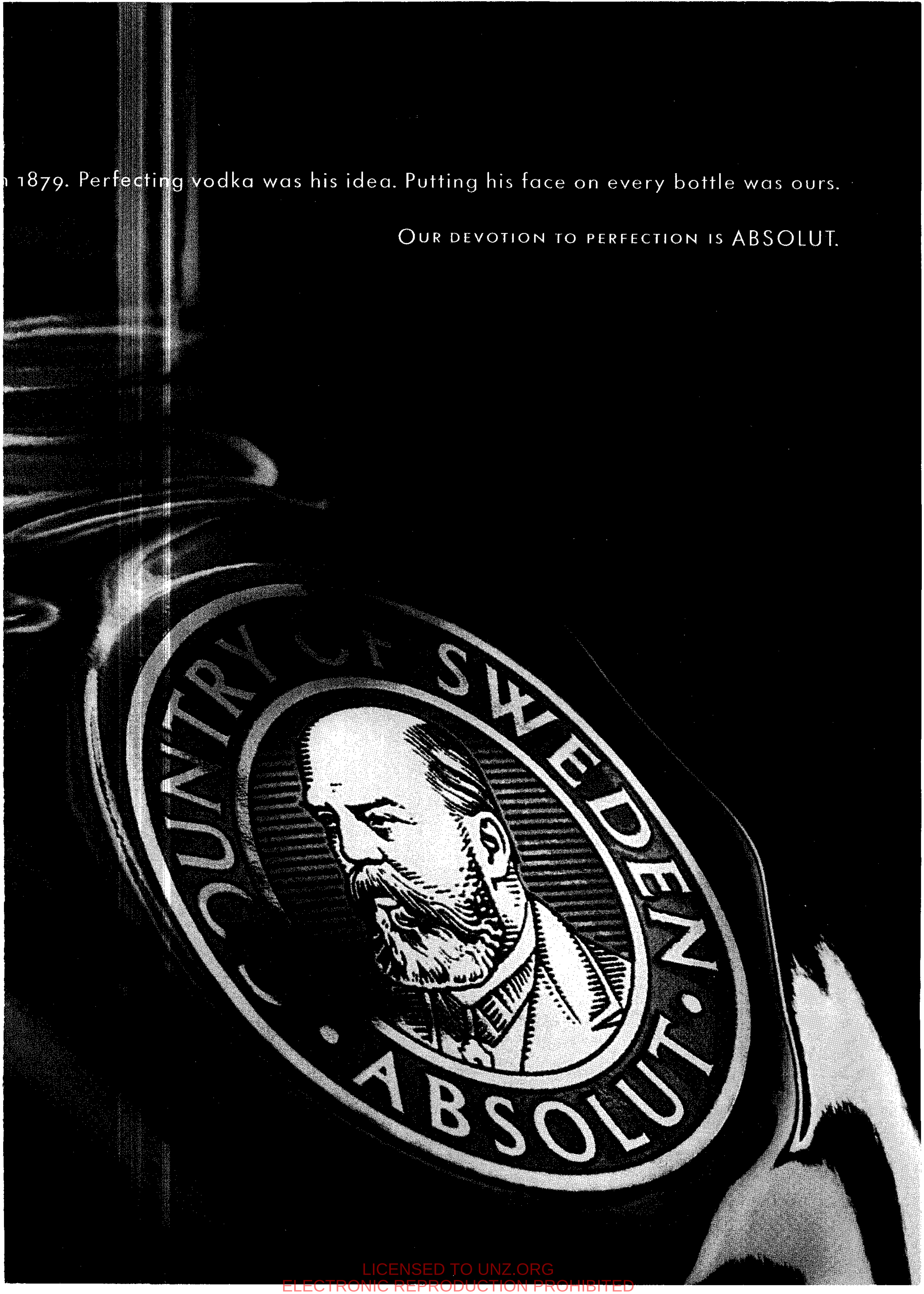
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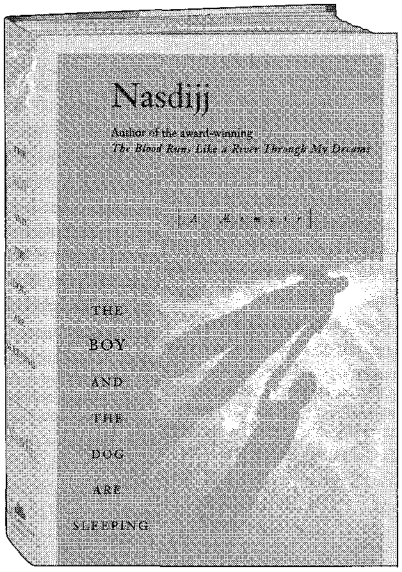
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Author of the award-winning
The Blood Runs Like a River Through My Dreams
THE BOY AND THE DOG ARE SLEEPING

THE BOY AND THE DOG ARE SLEEPING

Nasdijj

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—*San Diego Union-Tribune*

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CONTRIBUTORS

Philip Gourevitch ("The Optimist," p. 50) is the author of "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda" and "A Cold Case."

Joan Acocella ("Out of Character," p. 42) reviews books and dance for the magazine. Her book "Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism" is out in paperback.

Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 48) has a new humor collection, "All Meat Looks Like South America," which will be published in the fall.

Seamus Heaney (Poem, p. 78) received the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature. He is the author, most recently, of "Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001."

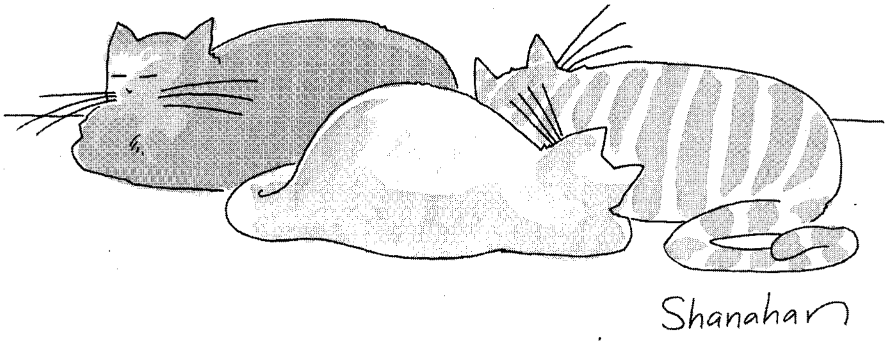
Elizabeth Kolbert ("Indian Point Blank," p. 36), a staff writer, covers New York politics.

Louise Erdrich (Fiction, p. 74) has published nine novels, including "The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse" and "The Master Butcher's Singing Club," which came out this month.

Peter Schjeldahl (The Art World, p. 82) is an art critic for the magazine.

Hilton Als (Books, p. 85) is a staff writer and the author of "The Women."

Joyce Carol Oates (Books, p. 90) has published works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and literary criticism. Her latest novel is "I'll Take You There." ♦



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THE MAIL

NO TALKING AT HARVARD

Jeffrey Toobin's article on the recent battle at Harvard over an invitation to a controversial lecturer recalled a perhaps equally contested Pete Seeger concert at Harvard in 1961, which I helped organize as a student ("Speechless," January 27th). The administration tried to force the Student Council to cancel the event, ostensibly because Seeger was then appealing a conviction (and a twelve-month jail sentence) for contempt of Congress—the result of his refusal, in 1955, to name names for the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Harvard finally allowed Seeger to appear, but only on the condition that he stick to singing and not speak about politics. Needless to say, this prohibition insured a sellout. One year later, Seeger won his appeal.
Lewis Auerbach
Ottawa, Ontario

"Hate speech" is a difficult issue, but it need not be as intractable as Toobin's account of the debacles at Harvard suggests. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides, "Any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law." The United States ratified this treaty but took a reservation to this specific provision, leaving us with the dubious distinction of being one of the leading exporters of hate speech. Other democracies have accepted this language as a reasonable—and workable—limitation in a dangerous world. It's a shame that our élites, at Harvard and in Washington, continue to insist on American exceptionalism.
Barbara Stark
Professor of Law, University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tenn.

ENOUGH FOR A WEAPON?

Seymour Hersh writes that "sometime in 2001 North Korean scientists began to enrich uranium in significant quantities" ("The Cold Test," January 27th). But it is far from clear that North Korea has actually enriched uranium, as opposed to having acquired the capacity to do so, and, if it has, whether the quantities are "significant." A newly declassified U.S. intelligence report reads, "We recently learned that the North is constructing a plant that could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for two or more nuclear weapons per year when fully operational, which could be as soon as mid-decade." It's worth remembering that Pyongyang began its uranium program after Washington failed to live up to its side of a 1994 agreement, and accelerated those efforts after the Bush Administration repudiated an earlier U.S. pledge of no "hostile intent."
Leon V. Sigal
Director, Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Program, Social Science Research Council
New York City

ASYLUM IN LONDON

As a Member of Parliament in whose constituency many asylum applicants reside, and who takes up many of their cases with the Home Office, I was interested in Jane Kramer's profile of an Afghan woman who sought asylum in London ("Refugee," January 20th). I would point out, however, that "indefinite leave to remain," which her subject was granted, and which Kramer defines as "full refugee status," is not the same as a grant of asylum, even though it entitles the applicant to permanent residence. Indeed, it generally means that asylum has been turned down. Nor is this distinction simply a matter of semantics, since full asylum status confers benefits that are not available to those with only indefinite leave to remain.
Gerald Kaufman, M.P.
London, England

•

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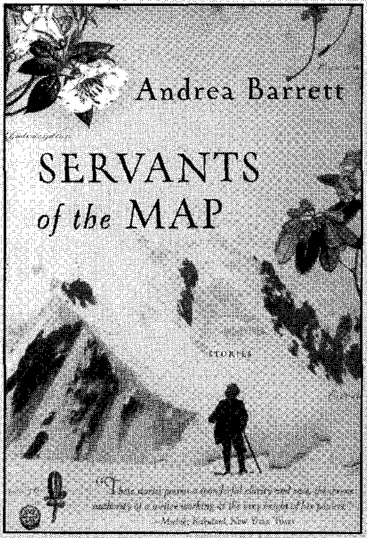

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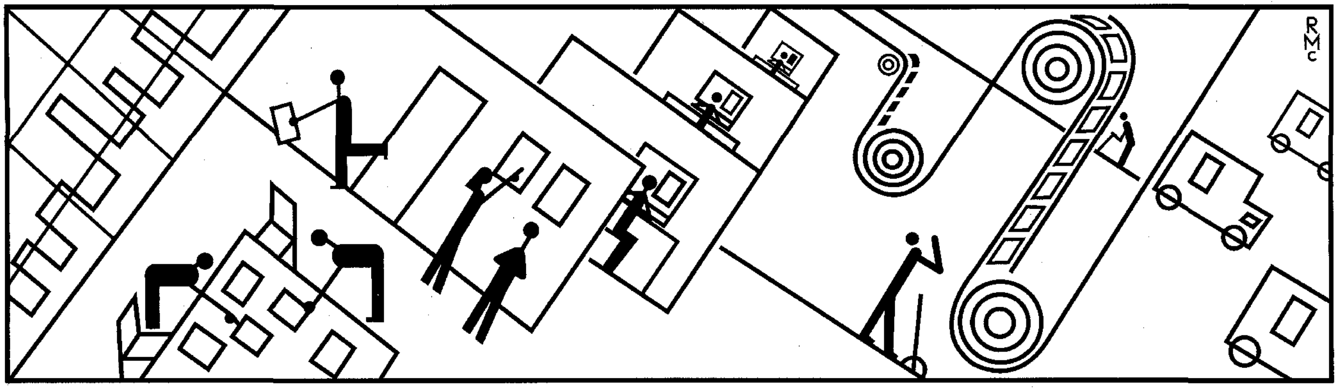

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AVENUE Q
A new musical with music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx and a book by Jeff Whitty is described by its creators as a kind of ironic "Sesame Street" for twentysomethings, set in the East Village. Jason Moore directs. In previews. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

BARBRA'S WEDDING
The actor Daniel Stern ("Diner") presents his first play, a comedy about an unemployed actor who lives next door to Barbra Streisand. John Pankow and Julie White star, and David Warren directs. In previews. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CHINESE ART OF PLACEMENT
In a new comedy by Stanley Rutherford, T. Scott Cunningham plays a neurotic man who seeks salvation through the principles of feng-shui. Directed by Jessica Bauman. In previews. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 212-206-1515.)

DIRTY STORY
The Labyrinth Theatre Company presents a new play about sex, politics, and the Middle East, written and directed by John Patrick Shanley. In previews. Opens Feb. 27 at 8. Through March 16. (Harold Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

LA FIESTA DEL CHIVO
(THE FEAST OF THE GOAT)
The Repertorio Español presents the première of the staged version of Mario Vargas Llosa's prize-winning novel "The Feast of the Goat," based on the life of the Dominican despot General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. Vargas Llosa has commended the production, which was adapted by Jorge Alí Triana and his daughter Veronica and is directed by Mr. Triana. In Spanish, with simultaneous-translation headsets available in English. Opens Feb. 27 at 7. (Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 212-889-2850.)

FUCKING A
The Public Theatre presents a new work by Suzan-Lori Parks, a reimagining of "The Scarlet Letter" that incorporates ten original songs (by Parks) into a drama about abortion and revenge. Directed by Michael Greif. In previews. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

I WANT YOU TO
Paradise Theatre ("Peter and Vandy") presents a new play that focusses closely on male-female dynamics. Monique Vukovic plays a colleague of a young filmmaker (Ken Forman) who invites her to a private audition. Written and directed by Eric Maierson. Previews begin Feb. 27. Opens March 2 at 3. (64 E. 4th St. 212-206-1515.)

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MY LIFE WITH ALBERTINE
Drawn from Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past," this new musical, directed by Richard Nelson ("Madame Melville," James Joyce's "The Dead"), relates the romance between the young Proust (Chad Kimball) and Albertine (Kelli O'Hara). Book and lyrics by Nelson and music and lyrics by Ricky Ian Gordon. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

O JERUSALEM
The Flea Theatre presents a new play by A. R. Gurney about a U.S. State Department official whose career and personal life are complicated by the events of 9/11. Stephen Rowe, Priscilla Shanks, and Rita Wolf lead the cast. Directed by Jim Simpson. Previews begin Feb. 26. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-226-2407.)

OUR LADY OF 121ST STREET
A group of friends reunite at a funeral home after the death of a nun they all knew, in Stephen Adly Guirguis's play, which comes to Off Broadway after a successful Off-Off run last summer. Directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. In previews. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100.)

A RITUAL OF FAITH
Brad Levinson's play is based on the story of a six-year-old Jewish Italian boy who was abducted by Catholics in the mid-nineteenth century and raised by Pope Pius IX. Opens March 2 at 7. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

SHOWTUNE
A theatrical revue celebrates the music and lyrics of Jerry Herman ("Mame," "Hello, Dolly!," "La Cage aux Folles"). Directed by Joey McKneely and performed by a cast of seven. In previews. Opens Feb. 27 at 8. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

STRING FEVER
Cynthia Nixon and Evan Handler star in an Ensemble Studio Theatre production of a new play by Jacquelyn Reingold that addresses the topics of single motherhood, fertility, and string theory. Directed by Mary B. Robinson. In previews. Opens March 3 at 7. (549 W. 52nd St. 212-206-1515.)

TAKE ME OUT
Richard Greenberg's popular play, directed by Joe Mantello, is set to reopen in the Walter Kerr. In previews. Opens Feb. 27 at 6:45. (219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

TEA AT FIVE
Kate Mulgrew plays Katharine Hepburn in a drama about the life of the actress, written by Matthew Lombardo and directed by John Tillinger. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

URBAN COWBOY
A musical based on the 1982 film stars Matt Cavenaugh and Jenn Colella. Directed by Lonny Price and choreographed by Melinda Roy, with musical direction by Jason Robert Brown. Previews begin Feb. 27. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

VINCENT IN BRIXTON
Lincoln Center presents the American première of a new play by Nicholas Wright about the time Vincent Van Gogh spent in London in his youth. Jochum ten Haaf plays the artist, and Clare Higgins plays his older lover, an English widow. Richard Eyre directs. In previews. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

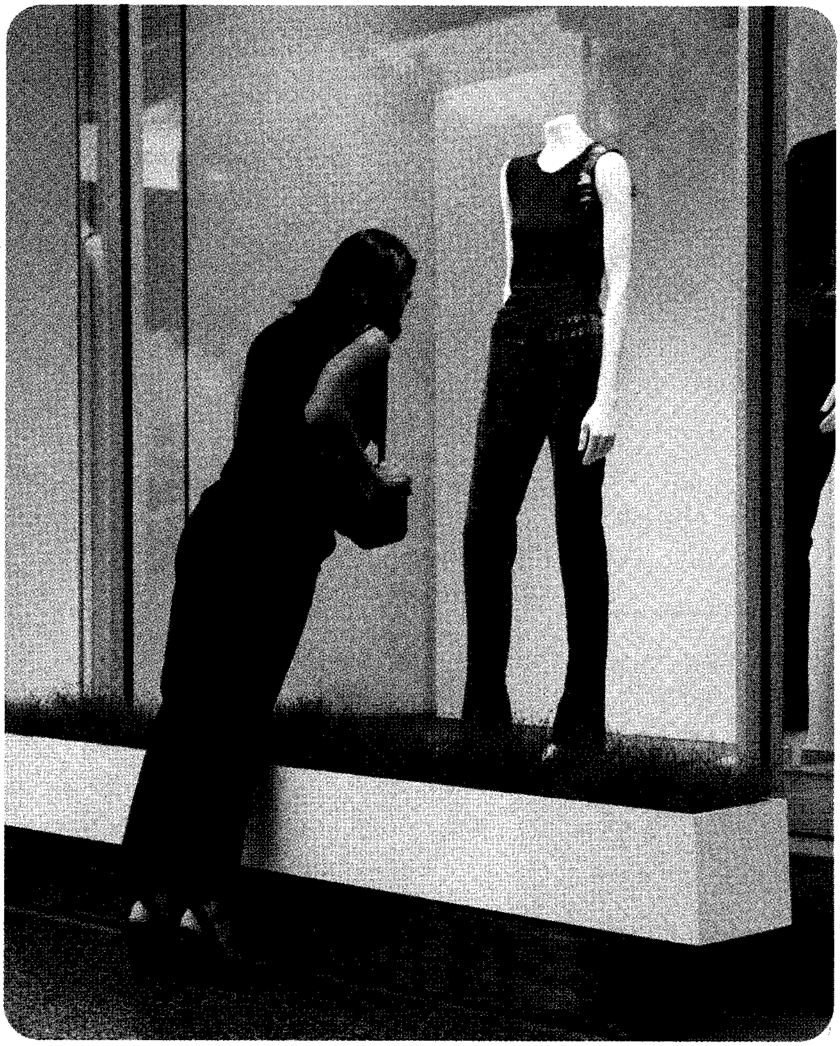
OPENED RECENTLY

ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
Elaine May's laugh-out-loud sortie into the world of public-access pornography, directed by Stanley Donen, features Heidi-the-Ho and her porn-star pals—who long to have words, not just organs, in their mouths. May loves her collection of lost meatheads, and her fine cast, including Danny Aiello, Jeannie Berlin, Eric Elice, and Linda Halaska, makes you care for them even as May pokes gentle fun at their stupidity. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/23 & 30/02.) (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 212-239-6200.)

BEDBOUND
The curtain falls (yes, falls) at the beginning of this startling piece of theatre, written and directed by Enda Walsh, to reveal a man and a woman in a bed—he in full business dress, she in a nightgown—enisled in a floor-to-ceiling sea of clutter worthy of "American Buffalo." The initial choked silence of the man (Brían F. O'Byrne) soon explodes in a storm of words that tells a tale of violence, sex, and the furniture business, and only gradually exposes the relationship between the two characters. O'Byrne's performance as the insanely ambitious salesman is both scary and hilarious. As the woman, Jenna Lamia is equally impressive, providing comic and tragic grace notes. Set design by Klara Zieglerova. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Closes March 2.)

LA BOHÈME
Baz Luhrmann has reset Puccini's opera in a cinematic Paris of 1957—on the eve of Godard's "Breathless"—and his *moto*-ready cast of young studs looks the part. Rodolfo and Marcello wear

Funny how something
without a head can call
your name so loudly.



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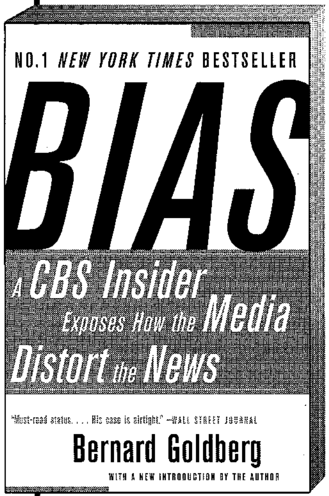
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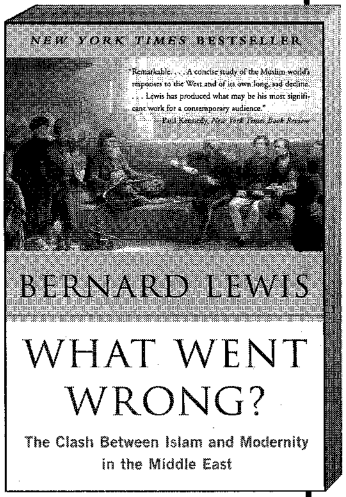
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leather jackets and boots, Mimi sports a trench coat, and the red-hot Musetta (Jessica Comeau) has hipster slacks and an Ann-Margret kittenishness. For Musetta's splendid "Quando me'n vo," the ensemble gathers on a silverized Parisian street that looks like a black-and-white Doisneau shot come to life. Rodolfo (David Miller) and Mimi (Ekaterina Solovyeva) have terrific voices, and they're both eye candy: he's a young Belmondo to her Eva Marie Saint. When this Rodolfo first lays eyes on this Mimi, enough heat jumps between the two of them to melt the snowflakes. It makes you want to hop a plane to Paris—the Paris in Baz Luhrmann's mind. Note: Three rotating casts perform the lead roles. (Broadway, 1681 Broadway, at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BRACE UP! (2003)

The Wooster Group presents a new production of its esteemed 1991 adaptation of Chekhov's "Three Sisters," in a translation by Paul Schmidt. Willem Dafoe stars, and Beatrice Roth, Anna Kohler, and Peyton Smith reprise their roles as, respectively, Irina, Natasha, and Olga. Directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424.)

COOKIN' AT THE COOKERY: THE MUSIC AND TIMES OF ALBERTA HUNTER

There is a scene in the Melting Pot's bio-musical of the blues singer Alberta Hunter in which the whip-slim mimic Debra Walton—who plays Alberta as a little girl, and goes on to play a white nurse, an octogenarian club manager named Barney Josephson, and a hep-cat record producer named Chris Albertson—transforms herself in voice and expression into Louis Armstrong and accompanies Ann Duquesnay (as the grown Alberta) in a duet of "When the Saints Go Marching In." It's a preternatural accomplishment—Jane Horrocks meets Eddie Murphy. This is just one highlight of an exhilarating production, in which Duquesnay's singing (particularly of "My Handy Man Ain't Handy No More") and the duo's acting keep the audience rapt. Written and directed by Marion J. Caffey, with musical direction by George Caldwell. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 212-279-4200. Closes March 2.)

DUBLIN CAROL

Conor McPherson directs his new play, a drama about an aging funeral director (Jim Norton), his young protégé (Keith Nobbs), his estranged daughter (Kerry O'Malley), and demon rum. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

FAR AND WIDE

On a set (by Vicki R. Davis) that evokes the mood of "The Garden of the Finzi-Continis"—a villa in Europe, a tennis court, wealth, V-neck sweaters, and sexual misery—the actors let their hearts go out to play and receive them back badly bruised. Arthur Schnitzler wrote his play for grownups: betrayal lurks under the façade of civility, nobody is disinterestedly glad to see anybody else, and the audience's sympathies change as circumstances reveal unsuspected depths—and shallows. Lee Bryant brings a gracious strickenness to the role of the proud divorcée Anna Meinhold-Aigner; and Lisa Bostnar, as Genia Hofreiter, progresses from the miserable but faithful wife of a vain, faithless egotist (Hans Tester) to the miserable but unfaithful wife of a vain, faithless egotist. "I can't get my bearings anymore," she tells her husband's latest conquest, Erna (the lovely Victoria Mack). "Life has become so much more trivial these days. When I was your age, certain things were still looked upon as terribly serious." Astutely adapted and directed by the Mint Theatre Company's artistic director, Jonathan Bank. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. Closes March 9.)

FEAR: AN ISSUES PROJECT

The latest installment in the Naked Angels theatre company's politics-related "Issues Project" series is "Fear," an evening of one-act plays on that theme, written by eight playwrights, including Jon Robin Baitz, Seth Svi Rosenfeld, and David Marshall Grant, and directed by Rob Morrow, Lizzie Gottlieb, Geoffrey Nauffts, and four other young directors. (Greenwich Street Theatre, 547 Greenwich St. 212-206-1515. Closes March 2.)

FIFTH OF JULY

Rarely has dialogue flown as surely as it does in this 1978 play, the first in Lanford Wilson's trilogy about the unconventional Talleys of conventional Lebanon, Missouri. After twenty-five years, the idea that cobbled-together families are as good as nuclear ones is no longer new, but Wilson got there first. Robert Sean Leonard is convincing as Kenny Talley, paralyzed in the Vietnam War, whose terror of his future is more moving than his inability to walk, and Parker Posey gives a breakthrough performance as Gwen, the woman married to the hunk John Landis (well played by David Harbour), whom Kenny and his sister, June, lusted after at Berkeley. Posey's Gwen is vital, mischievous, and surprising—a generous narcissist. The cast members work superbly together, fired by Jo Bonney's direction and Wilson's dynamic script. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG

Part fashion show, part night-club act, part hymn to Asian-American diversity, David Henry Hwang's update of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein show, set in San Francisco's Chinatown, works far better than the original. Directed and choreographed by Robert Longbottom. (11/4/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

George Bernard Shaw's 1917 play, written during the First World War, addresses the losses the war would bring—from a dearth of eligible suitors for England's women to the waning of the British Empire. Though typically Shavian in its preachiness, the play is also typical in its mixture of wit, offhand charm, and ever-relevant social insight. Gus Kaikkonen's clearheaded direction jibes with the peerless timing of a talented cast led by George Morfogen (Captain Shotover) and Rachel Botchan (Ellie Dunn) to create a strong revival of a timely play. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

THE HIGH PRIEST OF CALIFORNIA

Charles Willeford was a novelist in the Raymond Chandler tradition; in this, his only play—presented by the 29th Street Rep—he gives an engrossing, insightful depiction of sexual manipulation. Willeford is particularly skilled at presenting deceit as blunt honesty, and vice versa, as he unfolds his classic noir tale of an unhappily married woman and the man she picks up one night. As the struggling couple, David Mogentale and Carol Sirugo both turn in powerful performances. Directed, with a fine respect for telling silences, by Leo Farley. (212 W. 29th St. 212-206-1515.)

IT JUST CATCHES

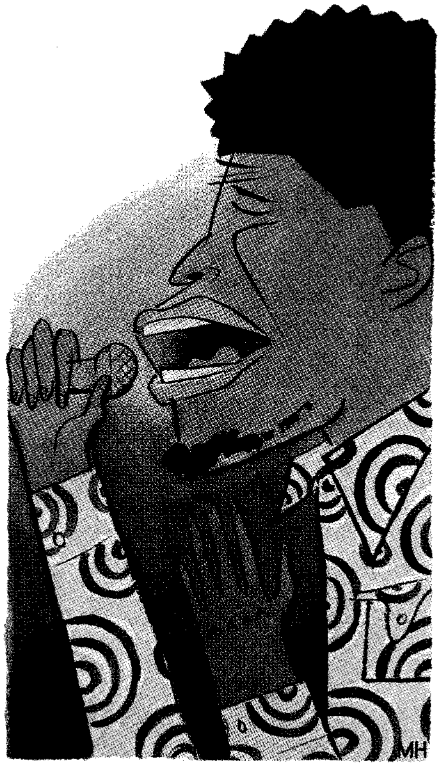
Carol Hemingway—daughter-in-law of Ernest—has strung together several of his stories and linked them with Cole Porter songs. Marsh Hanson's live piano music and occasional singing are delightful, and the five cast members adeptly assume several roles apiece, but the stories are presented with the guardedness that one might expect from a relative, pulling the punch of the author's powerful and sometimes chilling views on human motivations. Directed by Edward Hastings. (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

KIMBERLY AKIMBO

David Lindsay-Abaire's new comedy, which incorporates sitcom conventions with disease-movie-of-the-week melodrama, chronicles the misadventures of Kimberly, a teen-ager who suffers from a rare aging disorder that makes her look much older than her years. (She is played by Marylouise Burke, who is sixty-two.) In Lindsay-Abaire's topsy-turvy world, which owes a bit to Ionesco and Durang, Kimberly is an old soul, and the wacky grownups around her are hopelessly immature. Though the play doesn't offer much in the way of narrative propulsion, David Petrarca's fast-paced direction keeps it galloping along, Robert Brill's candy-colored sets add cheer, and Burke's wide-eyed performance is endearing and surprisingly believable. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

LITTLE FISH

This new play, choreographed and directed by Graciela Daniele, takes the form of a musical therapy session with a Manhattan woman (Jennifer Laura Thompson) whose chief problem is that she has no interesting problems. The cast gamely tries to enliven the wan narrative (Lea DeLaria is notably awake), based on stories by Deborah Eisenberg, but "Little Fish" is small fry indeed. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St., west of Eighth Ave. 212-246-4422.)



Donnie's neo-soul, at Village Underground.

MARCELLUS HALL

MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM
Set in 1927 at a white-owned record company, August Wilson's exquisite play has none of the quaintness of the usual dramatic depictions of black life; instead, it puts African-American behavior into both a socioeconomic and a spiritual context. On David Gallo's cunning set in the revival at the Royale, the white bosses sit in an unreachable, glass-panelled control room above the stage. Below, in the crepuscular gloom of a dilapidated office, the musicians banter and kid each other as they wait for the arrival of their meal ticket—the Delta blues singer Ma Rainey, played with sure swagger by Whoopi Goldberg. Wilson's play is itself a blues song, and, under Marion McClinton's deft direction, it does onstage what Rainey says her songs do: it understands life; it takes an empty world and fills it up with something. (2/17 & 24/03) (242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OBSERVE THE SONS OF ULSTER MARCHING TOWARDS THE SOMME
A play by Frank McGuinness stars Richard Easton, Justin Theroux, and Scott Wolf, and tells the story of a platoon of Irish Protestant volunteers who signed up for the Battle of the Somme. Directed by Nicholas Martin. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

ONE MILLION BUTTERFLIES
Primary Stages presents a new play by Stephen Belber ("Tape") about a young man who travels across America, searching for his missing younger brother, and for his own identity. Matthew Mabe stars. Directed by Tyler Marchant. (354 W. 45th St. 212-333-4052.)

RADIANT BABY
George C. Wolfe directs a new musical about the nineteen-eighties urban artist Keith Haring, with a book by Stuart Ross; music by Debra Barsha; lyrics by Ira Gasman, Stuart Ross, and Debra Barsha; and a set by Riccardo Hernández. The choreography is by Fatima Robinson, who is known for her work in Gap commercials and music videos for Michael Jackson, Mary J. Blige, the Backstreet Boys, and others. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

REQUIEM FOR WILLIAM
The seven short stories presented in the Transport Group's tribute to William Inge work surprisingly well as stage productions, and two stand out above the rest. "To Bobolink, for Her Spirit," gets terrific lift from Tina Johnson's dead-on performance as a humorless celebrity-autograph hunter; and "The Boy in the Basement," the story of a closeted Scranton mortician who lives with his overbearing mother and stroke-impaired father, is a minor masterpiece. When the mortician (Joseph Kolinski) has to embalm his only friend, a local high-school boy, he says in grief, standing at the mortuary table in the basement while his mother hectors him from upstairs, "Why couldn't you have been more careful, boy?" Directed by Jack Cummings. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 212-206-1515. Through March 2.)

RUSSELL SIMMONS' DEF POETRY JAM ON BROADWAY
The hip-hop legend has brought together spoken-word stylists from his HBO show and from the national poetry-slam circuit to create an exuberant, defiant production. The rap bards deliver poems that are part autobiography, part social commentary—addressing everything from love, America, racism, and terrorism to Krispy Kreme doughnuts. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

SHANGHAI MOON
In Charles Busch's swanning romp through thirties film conceits, set in Shanghai in 1931, Busch is Lady Sylvia Allington, a red-headed American temptress whose satin curves and breathy accent (somewhere in between Cary Grant's and Joan Greenwood's) captivate both her credulous, constipated husband, Lord Allington—memorably rendered by Daniel Gerroll, who later doubles as an opium-smuggling pirate—and General Gong Fei, played by B. D. Wong, who makes his entrance in elaborate military dress, cracking a bullwhip. Directed by Carl Andress. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 212-633-9632.)

WORM DAY
Penelope Gioris and Will Swenson star in a play by Matthew Calhoun about a quirky romance between two people who live a continent apart. Directed by Tom Herman. (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-505-0858.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Highlights of the final week of the winter season include several performances of "Coppélia" and one performance of Christopher Wheeldon's new ballet "Carousel (A Dance)," which he created last fall as a tribute to Richard Rodgers. Wheeldon explains, "Rather than trying to tell the whole story of 'Carousel' in twelve minutes, my idea for the ballet was to distill Julie and Billy's first meeting at the fairground and to explore the beginning of their relationship—her excitement at having a man interested in her, and the breaking down of her trepidations." ♦ Feb. 26 at 8: "Soirée," "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Sinfonia," and "Who Cares?" ♦ Feb. 27 at 8: "Coppélia." ♦ Feb. 28 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Tarantella," "Carousel (A Dance)," "Hallelujah Junction," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ March 1 at 2 and 8: "Coppélia." ♦ March 2 at 3: "Who Cares?," "Hallelujah Junction," and "I'm Old Fashioned." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570.)

BUGLISI/FOREMAN DANCE
Drawing on their regal standing as the standard-bearers of Martha Graham's epic tradition, Jacqulyn Buglisi and Donlin Foreman have lured a host of other accomplished artists to their company—including the actress Claire Bloom and the ballerina Martine Van Hamel—to join them in two alternating programs of new and repertory dances. Most remarkable is "Sacred Currents Through Bamboo," a dance set to the "Crouching Tiger Concerto" (from the film score) in a new arrangement by the composer, Tan Dun, performed here by the cellist Maya Beiser and the percussionist Glen Velez. In one section, two duetting couples square off: Miki Orihara and Stephen Pier, and Kevin Predmore and Virginie Mécène (each pair is a married couple in real life, as are Buglisi and Foreman). Standing on the shoulders of their mates, the women—petite, steely, and ornately costumed—spring from taut handholds, flying weightlessly around their redoubtable partners until the battle subsides and the men lean gently against the women's backs. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St.

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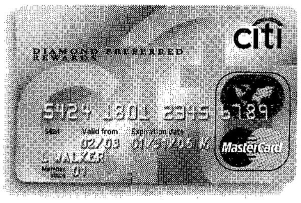

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212-242-0800. Feb. 25 at 7:30, Feb. 26-28 at 8, March 1 at 2 and 8, and March 2 at 2 and 7:30.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP
The "Carnival" series continues with the première of Dawn Akemi Saito's "Blood Cherries," a work that combines Butoh dance, music, and visual imagery to portray a woman's spiritual journey toward understanding her ancestry and her identity. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 25-26 at 7. Through March 16. Call the box office for the full "Carnival" schedule.)

DAVID DORFMAN DANCE
In "See Level," David Dorfman plays with the resemblance between bordering nations and bordering bodies. Chris Peck's electronic score creates a sense of emergency, but Samuael Topiary's video display offsets the panic with tranquil images of crashing waves, falling snow, and strikingly confusable closeups of skin and landscape. Dorfman and his four powerful dancers, climbing upon each other, seem to disregard the boundaries between themselves. When a woman asks a man to dance as he imagines she would, then to dance as she could not, the proposition is both farcical and philosophical, and the acrobatics that ensue are arrestingly inventive. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Feb. 26-March 1 at 8. Through March 8.)

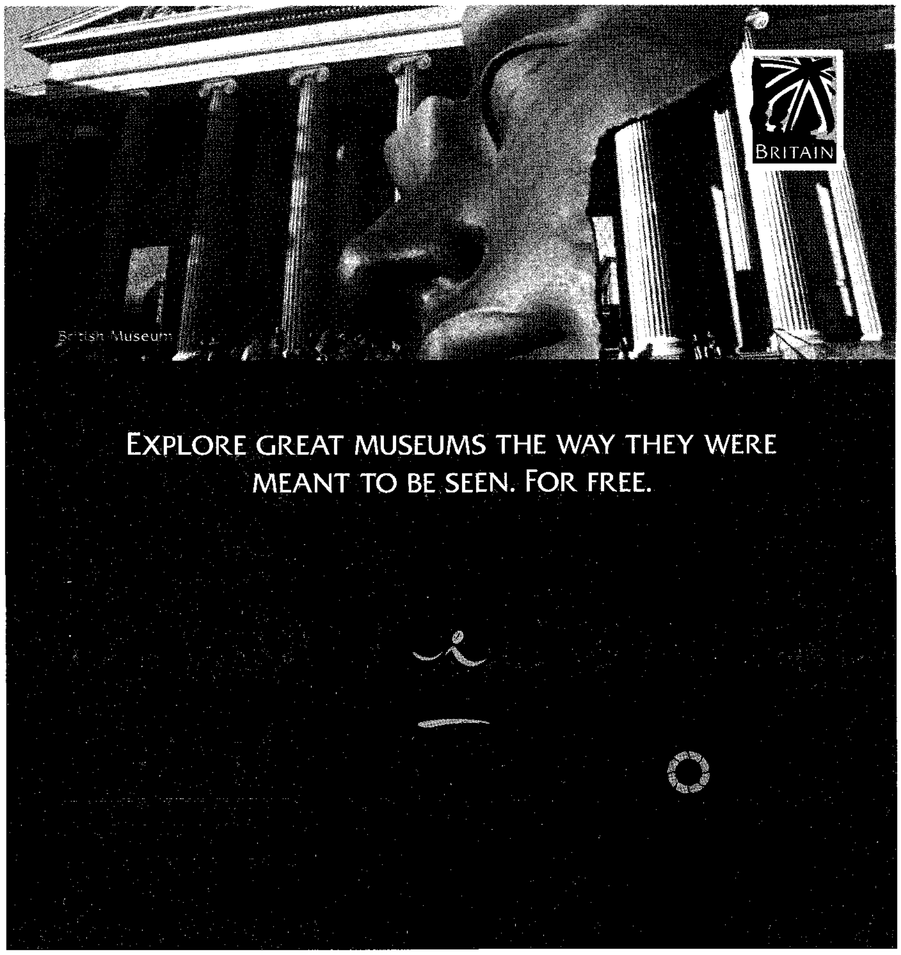
"FRENCH"
The choreographer Diane Fay has created a Francophile evening of ballets set to music by Ravel, Debussy, Fauré, and Pierney, as well as to Philip Lasser's piano piece "Les Hiboux Blancs"—played live by Min-Ju Choi. The saxophone quartet Sax in the City also performs, and the mime Mark Stolzenberg acts as host. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. Feb. 28 at 8, March 1 at 3 and 8, and March 2 at 3.)

BALLETT FREIBURG PRETTY UGLY
Johann Sebastian Bach wrote a lot of dance music, but his final masterpiece, "The Art of Fugue," wasn't part of it. Lacking dance rhythms, the work would seem to leave a choreographer little choice but to illustrate its dense counterpoint, but Amanda Miller doesn't so much follow Bach's structures as adopt the spirit of his Baroque game-playing. She finds her own doublings, inversions, and reversals and sets up her own canons—between dancers and even between different parts of the same dancer's body. The long lines of the fugues, played onstage by a quintet from the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, are a good match for Miller's style, a classical vocabulary made more sinuous. And the mathematical formality of the music is balanced by Miller's casual approach, as she lets her dancers sit on benches, awaiting their turn to play. (John Jay College Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-721-6500. Feb. 26-March 1 at 8.)

"MUSIC AND DANCE OF GUINEA, WEST AFRICA"
The twenty-five members of "Les Merveilles de Guinée"—a group founded by the choreographer Kemoko Sano—dance to the sounds of the balaphon (a xylophone), the Fulani flute, the twenty-one-string harplike lute known as the *kora*, and drums. New York's Fula Flute Ensemble kicks off the evening. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. March 2 at 7.)

KEIGWIN + COMPANY
The acclaimed choreographer Larry Keigwin presents an evening-length concert of dances on contemporary themes, including "Urban Birds," danced by Keigwin, Alexander Gish, and Nicole Wolcott; "Female Portraits," danced by Wolcott, Ashley Gilbert, and Verena Tremel, and the solo "Empathy," danced by Keigwin, which addresses the popularity of the drug Ecstasy in the gay club scene. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-431-9233. Feb. 28-March 2 at 8.)

"RHYTHMS OF THE CREED"
Kara McMahon Cross has choreographed the resonant cadences of the Apostles' Creed and set them to an original musical score by James Cross. Snezana Adjanski, Posy Knight, Theresa Ling, and Cara Regan perform the dance. Presented in association with Dance: Access and the Danspace Project. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Feb. 28-March 2 at 8:30.)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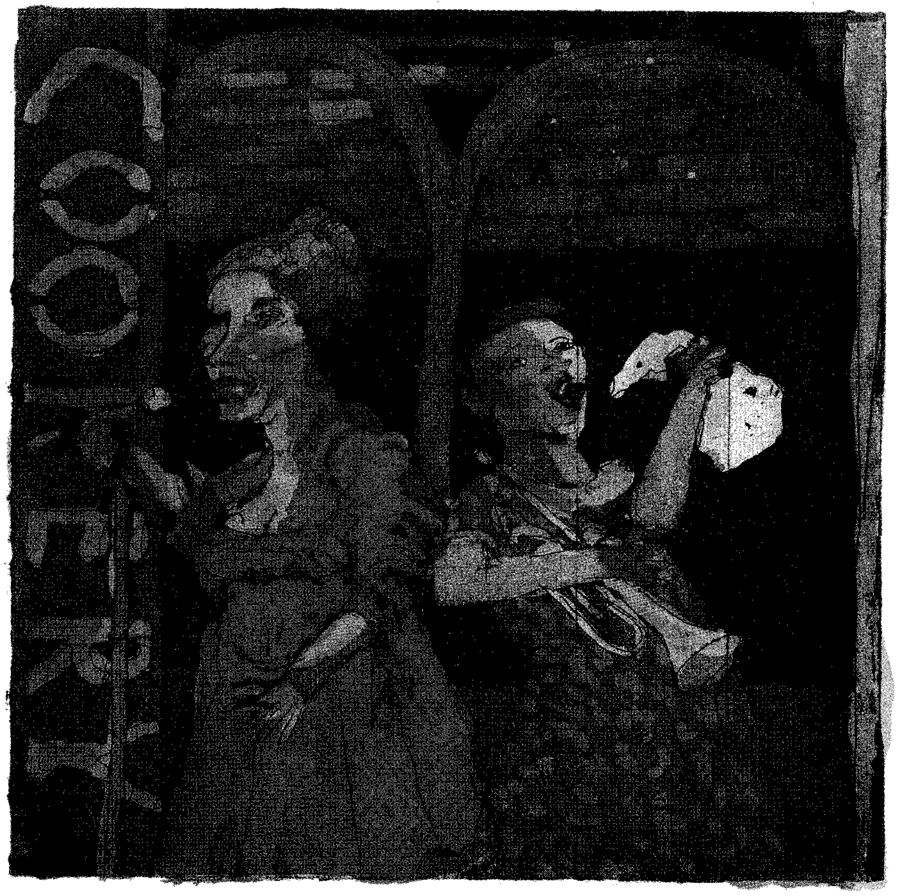
NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

TIBET HOUSE BENEFIT
David Bowie, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, Ray Davies, Angélique Kidjo, Ziggy Marley, Rufus Wainwright, and the Drepung Gomang monks celebrate the Monlam Great Prayer Festival, a traditional gathering first held in Lhasa in 1409. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 28 at 7:30.)

HALL AND OATES
From the seventies through the eighties, this duo was one of the preëminent practitioners of Philadelphia-bred blue-eyed soul. They return to promote their first studio album of new material in six years, "Do It for Love." (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. March 1 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Huun-Huur-Tu is a group of musicians from Tuva, a small republic in the southern-Siberian fold above Mongolia, who practice the art of *khoomei*, or throat singing. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. March 1 at 8. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)



Debra Walton and Ann Duquesnay in "Cookin' at the Cookery," at Theatre 3.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

BASIN BROTHERS
Top-notch Cajun music from down around the Atchafalaya River. (Hungarian House, 213 E. 82nd St. For more information, call 212-685-7597. March 2 at 7.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 3: The United Kingdom's **Coral** owe more to the party-boy antics of Manchester's Happy Mondays than they do to the more celebrated musical offspring from around their home turf, just outside Liverpool. Nonetheless, the band gleefully pillages musical styles like a gang of neo-psychedelic pirates.

CBGB & OMFUG
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-982-4052)—Feb. 28: **Stiffed** is a punky vehicle for the vocalist and songwriter Santi White to air her many grievances (the name comes from her view of her private life). This may sound like an extended—albeit arty—form of self-serving complaint, but the group's sharp, hook-friendly brand of propulsive rock harkens back to the era when radio first cautiously approached New Wave, and it swiftly becomes apparent that White's motivations are immaterial.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Feb. 27: **Kasey Chambers,** Australia's top female country vocalist. Feb. 28 and March 3: Named after a Monty Python sketch, California's **Toad the Wet Sprocket** made a brief but sizable impact on alternative-rock charts some ten years ago. Their poppy, if somewhat earnest, singles—propelled by Glen Phillips's soaring pipes—ran out of steam by the end of the decade, and they smartly called it quits. They're back now for a brief and somewhat inevitable reunion tour. March 4: At the top of the heap of indie rock's singer-songwriter category (rubbing elbows with the similarly downbeat Elliott Smith), **Cat Power** (née Chan Marshall) has become the queen of a self-explanatory micro-genre of indie rock called sadcore.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—The up-and-coming singer-songwriter **Kathleen Edwards** stops by on Feb. 28. In 1969, the San Francisco-based folk and blues singer **Barbara Dane** and Irwin Silber, the publisher of the folk-music magazine *Sing Out!*, collected more than a hundred protest songs in a volume called the "Vietnam Songbook." On March 1, Dane and a gang of performers from her day, including **Tuli Kupferberg,** of the Fugs, **Bev Grant,** and **Watermelon Slim,** revisit the songbook with

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a group of younger musicians (**Thurston Moore, Dean Wareham, Jenni Muldaur**, and others).

LUXX
256 Grand St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-1000)—Professor Jef, an intermittent teacher of New York City rock-and-roll history at N.Y.U., convenes his Terrorsex Cabaret on March 2 with **Botanica, Electric Turn to Me**, and others. The loose collective of sinister sophisticates in Botanica, the brainchild of the suave keyboardist Paul Wallfisch, share a similar aesthetic (as well as actual members) with such colorful local bands as Firewater and Congo Norvell. Fluctuating between energetic numbers and smoky ballads, Botanica provides the perfect soundtrack to the after-hours urban experience. Electric Turn to Me features former members of the band Mars Volta.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—Feb. 27: The **Jim Kweskin Band**. Kweskin, the sixties folk veteran and former leader of his eponymous Jug Band, is back on the scene with a new ensemble (featuring the fetching vocals of Samoa Wilson) and a new record of foot-tapping old-timey tunes, "Now and Again."

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Feb. 28-March 1: **Gogol Bordello**, led by the sallow-faced, darkly charismatic Eugene Hutz—equal parts Sid Vicious and Bertolt Brecht—updates its "Ukrainian Gypsy surrealistic punk cabaret."

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Feb. 27: The Venezuelan dance band **Los Amigos Invisibles**.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Feb. 28: The perennial cult favorites the **Figgs** play sparkling, punky pop à la Graham Parker and vintage Elvis Costello.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—March 2: **Cat Power** (see Irving Plaza) offers a solo show.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (212-777-7745)—Feb. 26: The Atlanta-based neo-soul singer **Donnie** released one of the most potent records of last year. His début, "The Colored Section," takes on racial issues with the confidence and aplomb of a singer whose voice evokes the best of Stevie Wonder. The power of his message lies in the way he keeps it moving (his varied repertoire displays Latin, gospel, and funk influences) and in his adventurousness—he's not afraid to include the sounds of clarinet and tuba, for example. Feb. 28-March 1: The veteran New York City rocker **Garland Jeffreys**.

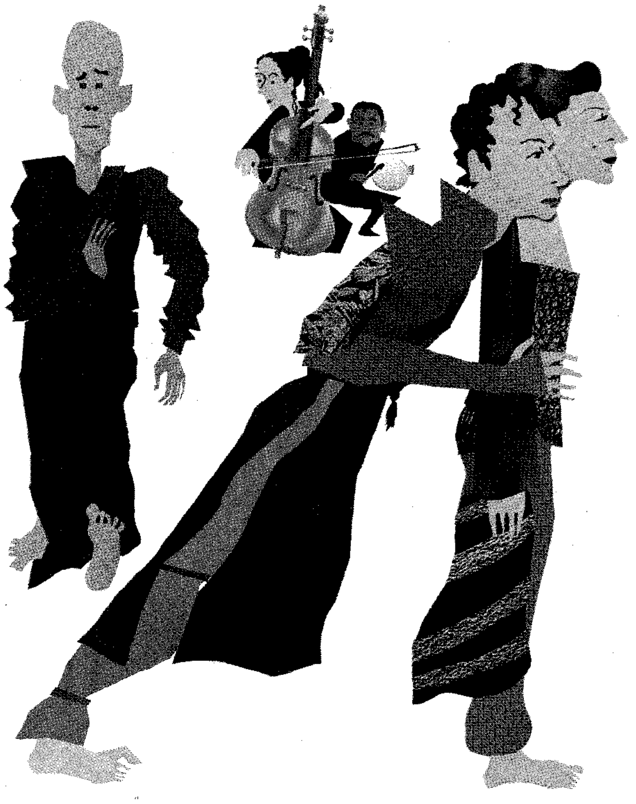
JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through March 8: A new generation may now have its very own Harry Connick, Jr., in the nineteen-year-old pianist and singer **Peter Cincotti**. Dining.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Feb. 28-March 1: The **John Pizzarelli** trio. Pizzarelli is an exceedingly talented singer, guitarist, and bandleader; he and his light-on-their-feet sidemen, the pianist Ray Kennedy and the bassist Martin Pizzarelli, adore the American songbook repertoire and pre-bop verities. Even without a drummer in sight, this threesome will have no problem swinging all night long. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through March 2: Is **Maynard Ferguson** the last of the big-band leaders? The high-note trumpeter may not play your grandfather's variety of swing (one of his biggest hits was a brassy take on the theme from "Rocky"), but this perennial crowd-pleaser, here with his Big Bop Nouveau Band, deserves points for longevity.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wrap-around murals, and, through March 15, **Rita Coolidge**. By the end of this decade every one of your favorite, or not so favorite, seventies pop sensations will have become a cabaret performer. Coolidge, she of the agreeable voice and deep musical associations with Joe Cocker, Kris Kristofferson, and others, is a case in point. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.



"Sacred Currents Through Bamboo," set to Tan Dun's "Crouching Tiger Concerto," is one of four premières by Buglisi/Foreman Dance during its season at the Joyce (see Dance).

STEPHEN KRONINGER

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through March 2: The **Jeff (Tain) Watts** quintet. Watts is a rock-'em-sock-'em drummer who answers to an extroverted muse. He's powered the bands of both Wynton and Branford Marsalis, and continues to be the most in-demand percussionist of his generation. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**.

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Feb. 28: The **Pete Malinverni** trio. The equilibrium achieved when a first-rate pianist finds a groove with a telepathic rhythm section is one of the transcendent satisfactions of mainstream jazz. The ingredients are in place here as Malinverni meets two fellow passengers in swing, the bassist **Dennis Irwin** and the drummer **Billy Drummond**.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Through Feb. 27: **Terri Lyne Carrington**, a skilled drummer who's logged time with luminaries such as Wayne Shorter. Feb. 28-March 2: The **Matt Wilson** quartet. His new album "Humidity" presents further proof that the marvellous drummer Wilson is also one of the great new-jazz bandleaders. With just two saxophonists and a bassist in tow, Wilson veers from free improvisation to revamped standards to highly composed original pieces. His wacky sense of humor puts the skillful musicianship in relief. Dining.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Feb. 28-March 1: The trombonist **Steve Turre** can generate more than enough heat as the sole featured horn; he ups the ante here by sharing the stage with the full-throttle trumpeter **Wallace Roney**.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—In 1976, the tenor titan Dexter Gordon gave notice that his fourteen-year-long self-imposed exile in Europe was soon to end with a series of now-legendary shows here. The saxophonist **Joe Lovano** was in the audience for Gordon's triumphant return, and, through March 2, he leads a group of former Gordon associates (the pianist **George Cables**, the bassist **Rufus Reid**, and the drummer **Victor Lewis**) in honor of the landmark jazz event. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—With all the modern-art temples in New York, it's surprising that the mid-career retrospective of the German photographer Thomas Struth should land in the house of Dendur. On one hand, it's an obvious match: Struth is best known for exquisite large-scale portraits of stately museums thronged with visitors. But it's also an unexpected leap into the twenty-first century for the Met, which has installed a pair of Struth's video portraits in the Great Hall. The main retrospective intermingles series of vacant city streets, intimate family portraits, lush green jungles, and museum scenes. Hanging in the inevitable retail nook at the end of the show, in what may be a curatorial dig at the recently shuttered Guggenheim branch in Las Vegas, is a stunning image of a pirate's cove at a casino. The second floor features a smaller exhibition, devoted exclusively to Struth's street photographs. Through May 18. ♦ The staggering riches of **"Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman"** make it clear that art was an expedient profession for a man of boundless drives. In all fields, he anticipated what unknown things, once they became known, would probably look like. His aesthetic research went straight to ultimate effects of sublime beauty—but strangely, he seemed to have no personal use for it. One is struck by the contrasting human warmth of drawings by Leonardo's teacher Andrea del Verrocchio and by some of his pupils and other followers. Leonardo wasn't exactly cold, but something more intimidating: indifferent. (Add modern irony to his temperament, and he would be Marcel Duchamp.) His strangulated heart found grisly relief in contemplating war, natural disasters, and the grotesque. Through March 30. ♦ **"African-American Artists, 1929-1945."** Through May 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Matisse Picasso"** juxtaposes more than a hundred and thirty paintings and sculptures by the two great rivals and peers. Through May 19. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle"** gathers all elements—film, sculptures, photographs, and drawings—of the five-part cycle. All films appear on loops in the galleries, with individual segments shown in the museum theatre. Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

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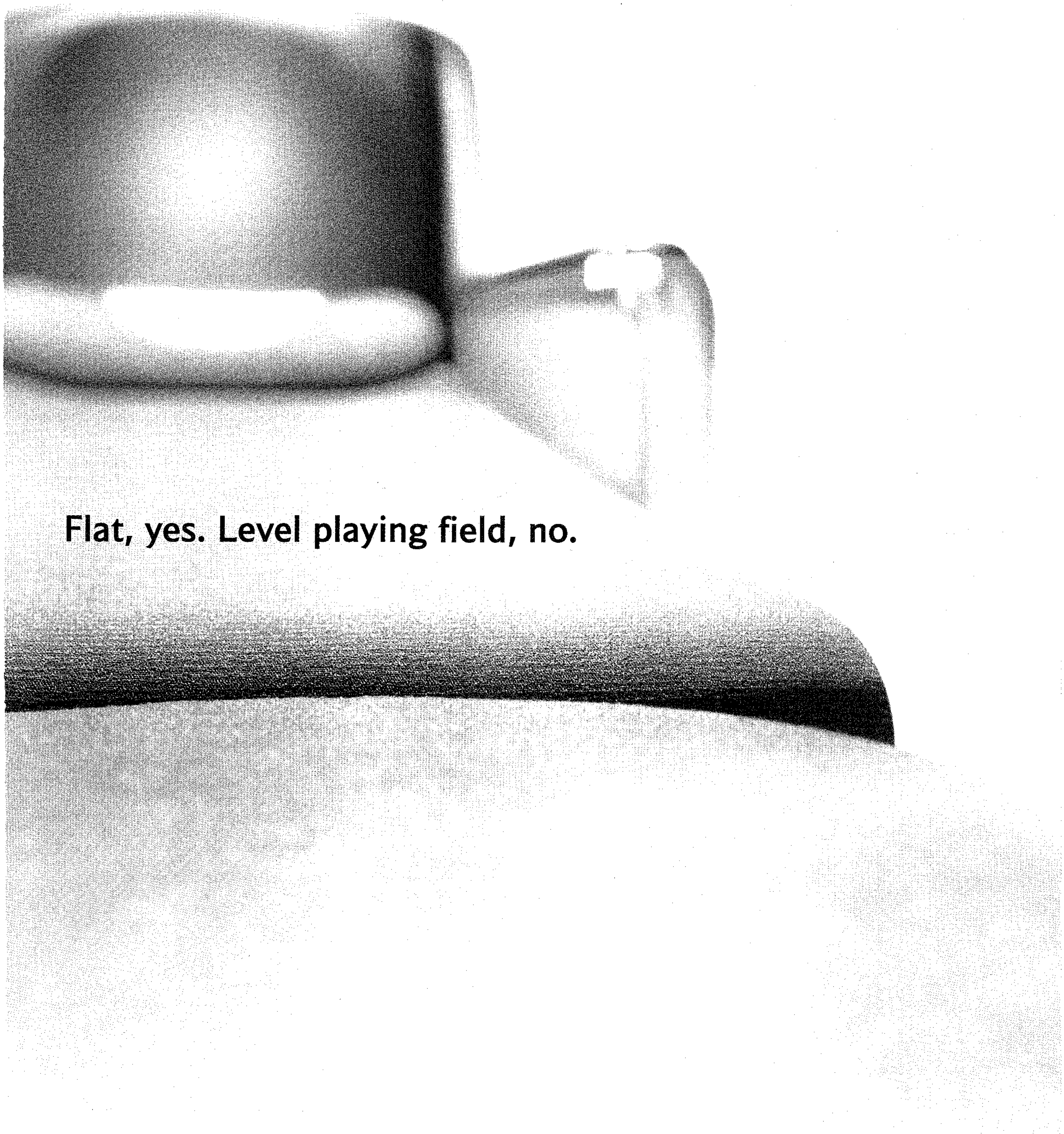

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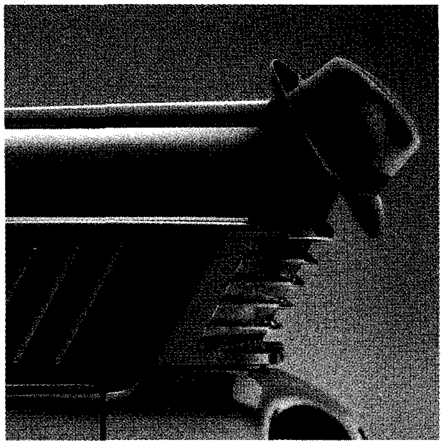

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WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The twenty-six-year-old Ryan McGinley obsessively photographs the nights and days of his friends and lovers on New York's Lower East Side. Presented unframed and mounted in obligatory large format, the color pictures are so achingly hip that you have an urge to resist them, but their immediacy and zeal win out. There's nothing surreptitious about McGinley's gaze, and his portraits look more like collaboration than documentation, from the redheaded nymph who slyly eyes the camera as she's caught mid-leap to the man on the verge of orgasm who stares at the camera disconcertingly stone-faced. Though May 18. ♦ **"Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio,"** a retrospective featuring the designs of the husband-and-wife team. Through May 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—Tolerate both the daunting title **"Fraktur Treasures from the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center"** and the unexciting explanation that the treasures in question are handwritten-text decorations by Pennsylvania Germans of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This small, dense show is riveting. It frames a four-decade period in which Germanic fancy writing—in birth certificates, religious quotations, and penmanship exercises—exploded into an art form of evolving regional styles and personal passions, furiously intense in design, color, and symbolism. There's a standout master, named Susanna Heebner. The Schwenkfelders, we learn, were a self-reliant Protestant sect that survives in three Pennsylvania churches. Through May 11. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO

25 W. 52nd St. (212-621-6800)—What's black and Jewish and has great moves and a microphone? Those who answered Lenny Kravitz may want to watch **"Sammy in the Sixties,"** a ninety-minute medley of interviews and performances by the irrepressible Sammy Davis, Jr. The sampling begins with a remarkable 1964 interview, filmed during Davis's Broadway run in "Golden Boy." An audience of narrow-tied, bouffant-haired college kids watch in delight as Davis demonstrates his modesty and poise and then slowly sheds them. Wisecracks give way to bouts of head-wiggling hilarity. He slaps himself, sings, smokes, conducts, does impressions of Jerry Lewis and Bogie. By the end, you have a sense of a personality nearly unhinged by the multifariousness of his own talent. Through April 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

LOIS DODD

Twenty-one homely, luminous paintings of windows and doorways, made from 1971 through 1992, by an underknown New York lyrical realist, whose style might be termed either rougher Alex Katz or woodsier Jane Freilicher. Dodd's summarizing, open brushwork transfigures the woebegone, in exterior details of tumble-down houses in Maine and vernacular window views. An odd quality—call it grand diffidence—attends works that often sacrifice unity to the dignity of small visual truths. When (at least twice in the show) everything clicks, the effect takes one's breath away. Through March 1. (Alexandre, 41 E. 57th St. 212-755-2828.)

SETH MICHAEL FORMAN

Forman paints tranquil, ghoulish vignettes. Most depict solitary men or women engaged in some simple activity—dropping a bag off a cliff, say, or lecturing to a decapitated head. The settings, rural but oddly desolate, suggest a nonsectarian dreamland. Often, Forman's oneirism feels too literally dreamlike, too private. We end up wishing that he would apply his considerable talents to some less hermetic iconography. Through March 8. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

TABLES FOR TWO

THOMAS BEISL

25 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-222-5800)—A recent Department of City Planning community profile credited Fort Greene, Brooklyn, and environs with 98,620 citizens, a healthy number of whom were American Indian, Pacific Islander, and "Some Other Race Nonhispanic." The survey offered nothing on Austrians, but Thomas Ferlesch, a Viennese expat, and, until recently, executive chef at the soigné Central Park West bistro Café des Artistes, was not discouraged. Last spring, while walking his kids to school, he spotted a vacant space directly opposite the Brooklyn Academy of Music and said goodbye to Central Park West. "It was that simple," the longtime outer-borough resident told a few diners admiring the cozy, mahogany-and-wrought-iron atmosphere on a freezing winter evening. "It's not like I have something against the Upper West Side."

The Viennese, according to an actress from the Shakespeare-and-Chekhov doubleheader across the street, are "not exactly big on the veggies." Ferlesch's *gulyash*, which piles braised beef cheeks over spaetzle with a pickle sidecar, is confidently light on green distractions, as is the towering pot-au-feu, short ribs with marrow in consommé. Still, Ferlesch does delicate things with fish and fowl, and his Gallic-nuanced menu may confuse customers expecting a more unilateral Viennese approach. One BAM patron fresh from a screening of African-diaspora films asked the chef, "Isn't pot-au-feu, like, French?" "No," Ferlesch said, adjusting his earring. "Boiled beef is very much part of Viennese culture. French is just easier to understand."

Dessert is part of Viennese culture, too, and Ferlesch's Linzertorte is compulsory, though all the choices—such as the crêpes gilded with apricot jam or the *Milchrahmstrudel* of farmer cheese in an artery-blocking vanilla sauce—compliment the Mozart *Kaffee*, a caffeine-and-crushed-almond number that does a lot to explain the maestro's hyperactivity. After polishing off a second bottle of Blaufränkisch, one group seemed especially happy to see their *gulyash* reëmerge from the kitchen in a doggie bag big enough for two more dinners. Ferlesch looked pleased, too. "It's the same dish I used to serve at Café des Artistes for $28," he said. "Same beef, same supplier, same portion—only here, it's half the price." (Open daily for dinner and weekends for brunch. Entrées $13-$16.)

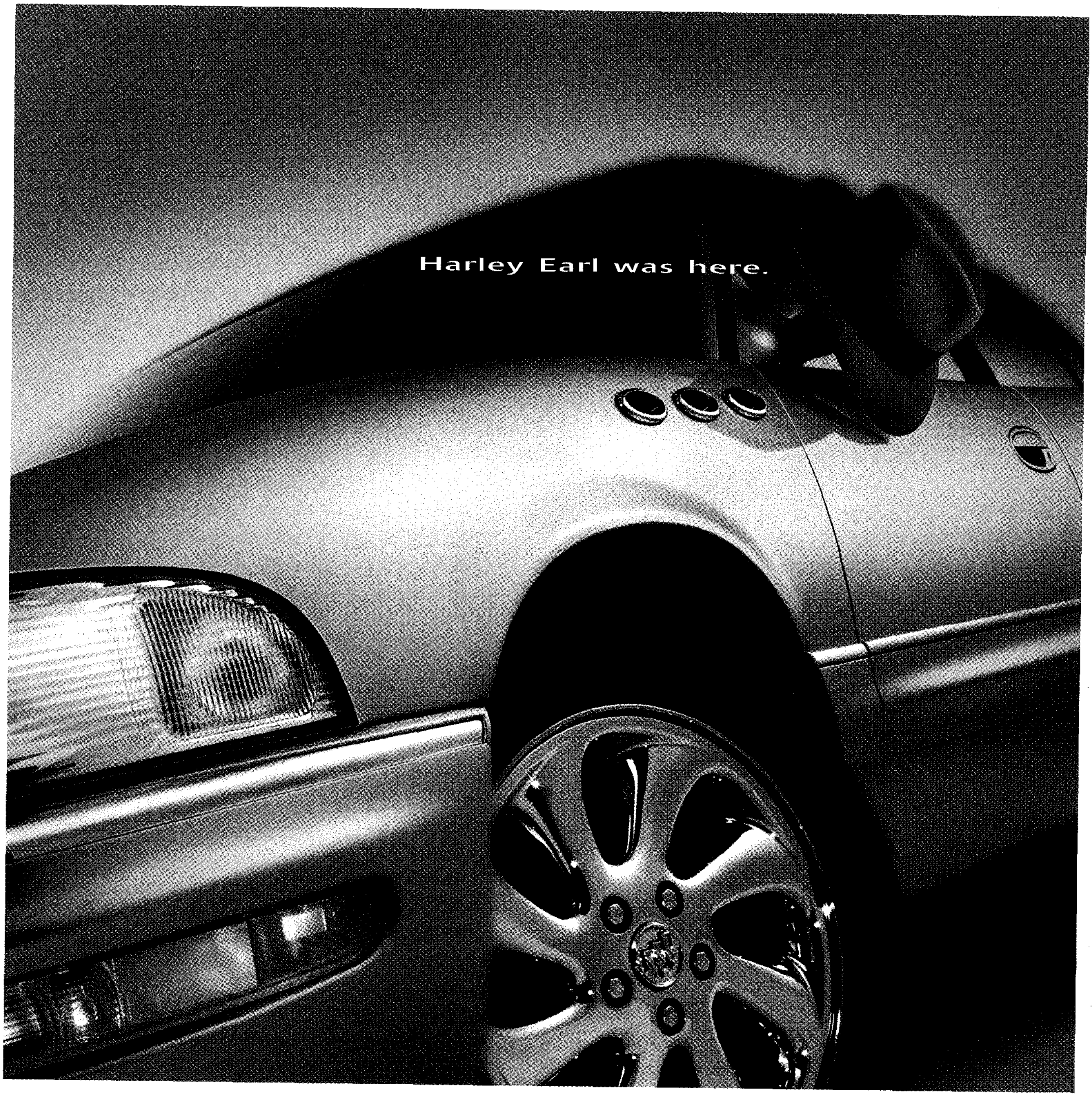
—*Andrew Essex*

ANA MARIA PACHECO / NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS

Downstairs, a willfully bizarre grouping of life-size sculptures showcases the Brazilian-born artist's macabre expressionism. Pacheco's heroine, a wistful woman in a white dress, turns from a trio of arguing naked men to three calm women playing with golden cowrie shells. It's an urgent, memorable, baffling tableau. Upstairs is a room full of Courbet landscapes complemented by terrific single pictures by Corot, Delacroix, Daumier, and Daubigny. The biggest of the Courbets, a snowy forest scene, is sheer kitsch—a Bob Ross knifework demonstration—and also proof of Courbet's blizzardy vehemence. Both shows through March 1. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 212-879-6606.)

ÉDOUARD VUILLARD

A large, uneven show of the shy French master (1868-1940) is no substitute for the mighty Vuillard retrospective at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. The most covetable items are the drawings, pastels, and oil sketches from Vuillard's glory days of Symbolist figures and Ibsen-tinged interiors. Apart from these—and one great, crusty panel painting from 1913, showing the artist's mother reading a newspaper by windows framing a dazzling city view—the show is overwhelmed by late, weak land-



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scapes and grossly overworked portraits. Still, even failed Vuillard has a certain something. Through March 8. (Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 212-744-2300.)

Short List

DIANA HOROWITZ
Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 212-535-8810. Through March 15.

MAY STEVENS
Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 212-397-0669. Through March 22.

WAYNE THIEBAUD
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997. Through March 19.

"Sounds French," a monthlong festival of French new music, comes to New York this week, featuring works by (clockwise from bottom left) Pierre Boulez, Bruno Mantovani, Marc-André Dalbavie, Philippe Manoury, and Henri Dutilleux (see Classical).

FRANÇOIS-MARIE BANIER

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

WILLIAM BAILEY
Many hermetic still-lifes, plus vaguely Balthusian nudes of young women, by the arch-conservative realist, whose changeless style is an earnest of metaphysical conviction and/or paralysis. He renders shelves and tabletops of old-fashioned ceramic and metal vessels with slightly fuzzed precision in finely adjusted grays and earthen colors with decorative blue accents. Bailey's obsessively scrutinized vessels have more sensuous presence—sexiness, even—than his phlegmatic nudes, which isn't to say that they have much. Time stands still. Calendar art for people who don't care what year it is. Through March 15. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

LUCIAN FREUD
The hundred and eight doodlish drawings here, many double-sided (displayed in frames hinged to the wall), were made in Wales in 1940, when the artist was seventeen years old, and they're mostly so nugatory, it's fascinating. A few caricatures are sprightly, and three or four portrait sketches distantly foreshadow the artist's psychologically charged realism. But the bulk of the show is a record of puerile maundering of a sort that most artists, when they hit their mature strides, take pains to suppress. Plainly, Freud fandom has incubated a cult. Will there soon be a market in his fingernail clippings? Through April 12. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

ANDY GOLDSWORTHY
Of all the artists in the wind-burned-cheek school of British hiker post-minimalists, the Scotland-based Andy Goldsworthy is the easiest sell, because he's so intent on bringing ruddy outland beauty back alive. Three eight-foot cairns—hive-like circular pyramids of chipped and reddish sandstone slabs—surround projecting corners and a pillar of the gallery. They emit a faint, stony, nostalgic odor, as well as elegance and desperate romanticism—imagine sets by Carl Andre for a production of "Brigadoon." Through March 15. (Galerie Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

CHARLES LE DRAY
The driven miniaturist shows a perfectly made, coarse uniform, complete with zippers, keys, and tools, for a handyman named Chas, who must stand about two feet tall; collages of worn-looking and colorfully patched pieces of diminutive blue jeans; a cricket cage made of human bone (looks like ivory); and two many-shelved, eight-foot-high glass cases containing thousands—thousands!—of itsy-bitsy glazed ceramic vessels, possibly all different and each ravishing. Overwhelmingly fetishistic, LeDray's art imparts a gruelling joy. Through March 1. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337.)

Short List

ROBERT RAHWAY ZAKANITCH
Spike, 547 W. 20th St. 212-627-4100. Through March 1.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

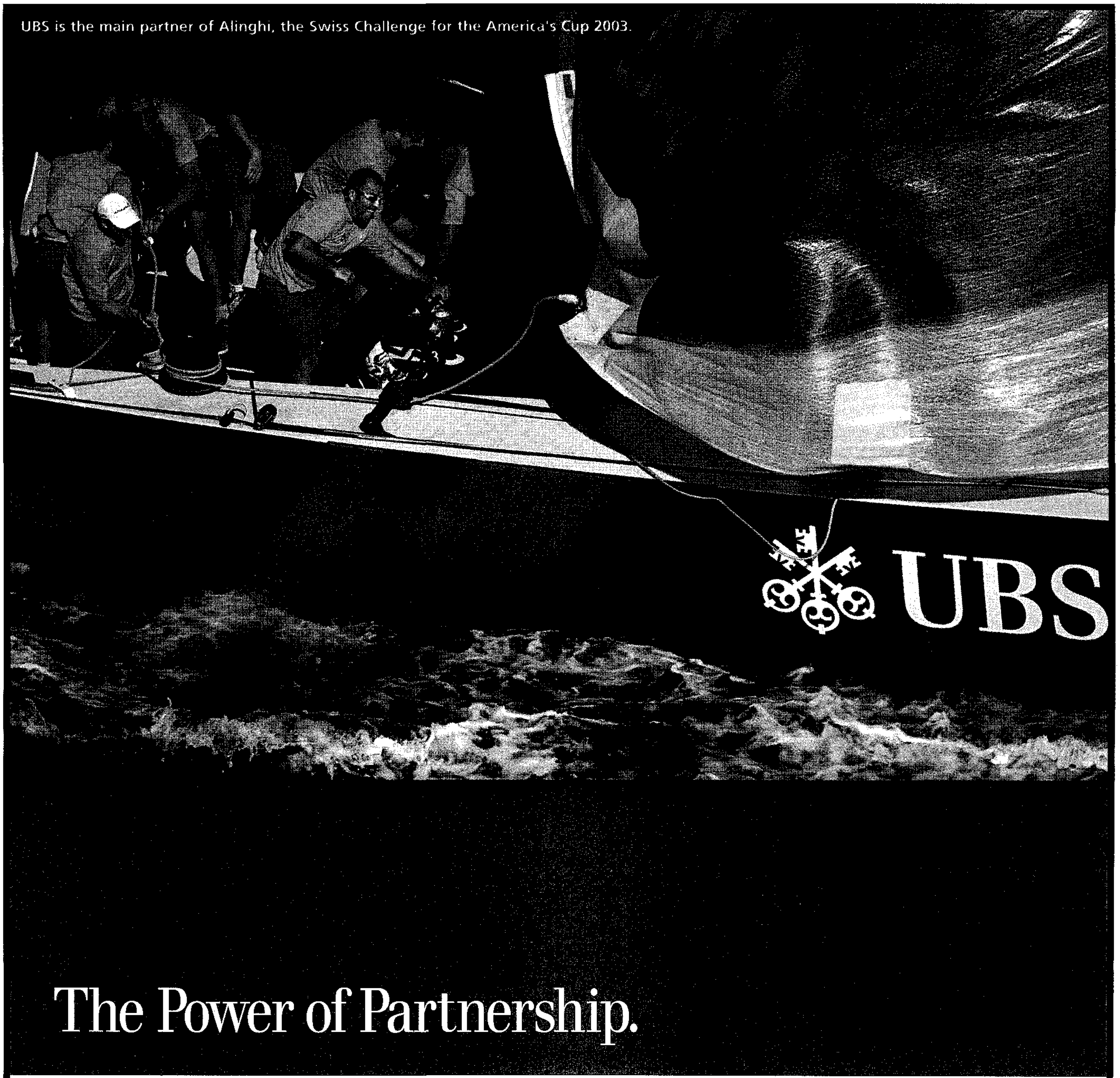
"TIME CAPSULE"
This exhibit of counterfeit artifacts and parodies of museum displays takes aim at both curators and archeologists. Shuli Sade's carefully marked-off dig seems to represent the tar pit from which the other pieces, such as Nadin Ospina's pre-Columbian-style Bart Simpson statuettes, were unearthed. Jimmie Durham's "Pocahontas's Underwear" offers a pair of red satin panties covered with feathers and trimmed with wood-beaded fringe, under a label explaining their provenance: found on the trail called Broad Way. Through March 8. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. 212-219-0473.)

Short List

SARAH PLIMPTON
June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 212-226-1660. Through March 11.

PHOTOGRAPHY

ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ
Kertész is without doubt one of the most exciting black-and-white photographers to have ever picked up a camera. He abandoned an established career in Europe, arrived in New York City in 1936, and three decades of obscurity followed. It wasn't until 1964, when MOMA's John Szarkowski rediscovered his work and mounted an exhibition, that Kertész regained his place among the acknowledged great modernists. These images, all taken in New York City, are those of an outsider, voyeuristic and melancholy. Kertész peers from his apartment bal-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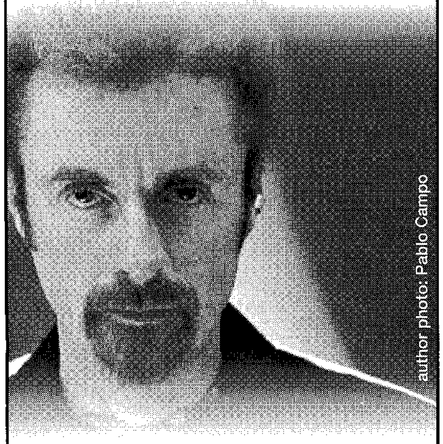
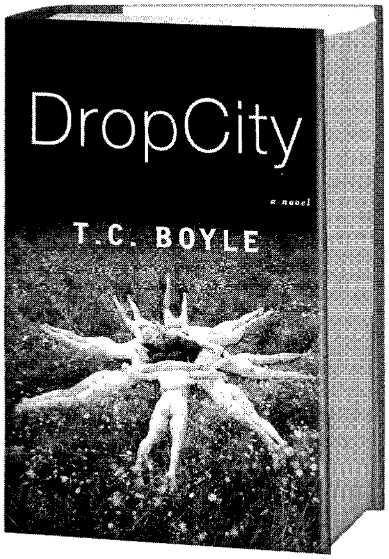
Peace, love and T.C. Boyle.



What a trip.



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ON SALE FEBRUARY 24

cony over snowy rooftops, at a woman sitting in her windowsill, and through trees into the lives of the locals below. He masterfully infused these banalities with a sense of humanity and wonder that is unrivalled in the medium. Through March 15. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 212-627-3930.)

MARI MAHR

There is, at first glance, something pleasantly decorative and gimmicky about Mari Mahr's photographs of dolls and figurines posed against real-life backdrops from their country of origin—a cowboy doll, his plastic face rubbed smooth with age, stands in front of a landscape prickly with shrubbery and stubby clumps of grass; a pale, moon-faced Chinese doll, her paint flaking, smiles beatifically as a twisty ribbon of river unspools behind her—but eventually Mahr's tableaux take on a sort of unsettling beauty and sadness, and together weave a gentle but insistent story. Through her dolls' clear eyes, Mahr—who immigrated from England to Chile thirty years ago—creates a surprising and moving portrait of the exile's experience, in which facing a new and uncertain future also means occasionally turning back to gaze across the sea toward home. Through March 1. (Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

DAVID STEWART

In the imagistic shorthand employed by so many contemporary photographers, children symbolize misplaced sexuality (if not downright deviance), and the elderly (often the photographer's beleaguered parents) represent hopelessness, resentment, and ruined dreams. But there's no such dourness in David Stewart's exuberant celebration of old farts, which could be a collection of giant stills from some fantastic independent British film about eccentric, fun-loving geriatrics. In "Game Boys," two codgers in three-piece suits play video games, the floor littered with cheese curls, their faces rapt. They reappear, with a third man, in "Six Feet Under," wearing birthday hats and dangling their feet into an open grave; everyone looks pretty relaxed, actually. The photos, which were printed using a painstaking process called Carbro, are jewel-toned and energetic, and make old age look like a Technicolor destination you wouldn't mind visiting sometime soon. Through March 31. (In Camera, 511 W. 25th St. 212-647-7667.)

WILLIAM WEGMAN

The cuteness of Wegman's weimaraners, regal as they can be, tends to overshadow any conceptual or technical merit in his pictures. But this well-curated show pits rarely seen video work (dogs playing with plastic bottles) and grids of early photographs (of family members or girlfriends) against the more familiar images of the artist's extraordinarily photogenic dogs. The recent work is Wegman's most abstract—even austere—dog work yet. In a few images the dogs become veritable wisps that slip out of his camera's view, like a canine version of nineteenth-century spirit photography. A triptych shows a pile of dogs, and just visible in the mess of snouts, haunches, and floppy ears is Wegman's hand, holding it all together. Through March 1. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

THOMAS WERNER

In his discomfiting and at times harshly beautiful abstract photos, Werner forgoes traditional representational dictates to concentrate instead on color, depth, and light—a challenge for the artist, of course, but also for the visitor, for whom viewing such photography represents a fresh, but also demanding, experience. Werner's painterly images—which were created by exposing outdated film to strong heat, cold, or chemicals—yield colors of astonishing intensity and depth, including a yellow as rich and fatty as egg yolks and an algal shade that slides into a blue-green so bitter you can almost taste it. But the photos are anything but monochromatic; in these inscrutable color fields, the subtlest gradations of tone can feel startling, as in one picture in which shadowy shapes—barely visible, mostly indiscernible—lurk in a sea of bottomless indigo. Through March 15. (Hawkins, 526 W. 26th St. 646-638-2883.)

"GERMAN PHOTOGRAPHY"

This show is required viewing for those who want to get the most out of the explosion of German work on view in New York City right now. The gallery surveys the most important (and infamous) styles and artists, ranging from Karl Blossfelt, at the turn of

BOOK CURRENTS

South for the Winter

"Earthly paradise discovered. Come," the artist Francis Picabia telegraphed his wife in 1909; Picabia was vacationing in Cassis, on the Côte d'Azur, and thought he should share the place's benefits. In **FRENCH RIVIERA** (Assouline), Xavier Girard examines the flight south. Phillippe Collas and Éric Villedary, in **EDITH WHARTON'S FRENCH RIVIERA** (Flammarion), look at the same migration: "Hundreds of pale, nostalgic, young invalids" known as "winter swallows" sought the seaside cure in the South of France. Even a glimpse of the Riviera's pale, clear light and scrabbly landscape could inspire visitors to drop anchor and set up camp, or—if you were Queen Victoria—build a chalet with four hundred bedrooms and two hundred and thirty-three bathrooms and order Scotch Guards and Bengali officers to carry the tea service. The English invaded first; after the First World War came the Americans. A shot by Jacques-Henri Lartigue gives us a tall dancing couple just inside a palm-shaded terrace; at his Villa Mauresque, Somerset Maugham blamed his writer's block on the magnificent view from his desk and covered the window.

In 1922, the new Train Bleu connected the English Channel at Calais to the South of France. By August, 1962, according to a travel guide quoted in Robert Kanigel's **HIGH SEASON** (Viking), "you could not tell where the tablecloths of the Saint-Tropez waterfront cafes ended and the beach began, except that the beach had navels." Now, a hundred and seventy flights land each day in Nice. Perhaps it's something in the water, which was, to F. Scott Fitzgerald, "as mysteriously colored as the agates and cornelians of childhood, green as green milk, blue as laundry water, wine dark."

—*Lauren Porcaro*

RICHARD McGUIRE

the last century, to the Bauhaus, in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, to Bernd and Hilla Becher, today's most influential teachers of photography. There are wonderful surprises, like EVA's 1925 multiply exposed Charleston dancer who flaps around a saxophone player and Marta Hoeppfner's hilarious Expressionistic dreamscape "Sudden Fright." August Sander's portraits of a hotelier, boxers, and schoolgirls ooze provincial pride. Studies of water drops done in the fifties by Peter Keetman are positively psychedelic, and Erich Saloman's monumental "Reichstag Diptych," from 1930, in which Nazi officers buzz around the parliamentary hall, is absolutely arresting. Through March 1. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

Short List

JOAN FONTCUBERTA
Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.
Through March 8.

CHRIS STEELE-PERKINS
Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 212-431-0292.
Through March 15.

MARLA SWEENEY
Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.
Through March 1.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
Feb. 27 at 10 A.M.: Impressionist and modern paintings, drawings, and sculptures, including works by such artists as Daumier, Manet, Masson, and Moore. ♦ March 4 at 10 A.M.: American art works. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

SWANN
Feb. 27 at 10:30 A.M.: The house holds its eighth annual sale of African-Americana, featuring a selection of posters, books, musical items (such as a Liberian bass thumb piano, from 1929), paintings, and mechanical toys, along with letters and documents from the slavery era, the Civil War (including a cache of thirty-eight letters concerning African-American soldiers, expected to bring up to ten thousand dollars), and the civil-rights movement. ♦ March 3 at 3: Works of art on paper, a sale including lithographs, etchings, drawings, and woodcuts by such artists as Géricault, Gauguin ("Nave Nave Fenua," estimated to sell for approximately forty thousand dollars), Braque, Kirchner, and Johns. ♦ March 4 at 10:30 A.M. and 2:30: Prints and drawings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Picasso, Richter, Kent, Barlach, Cassatt, Chagall, and many others (along with a sculpture by De Chirico, "Il Gladiatore"). (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Franco Zeffirelli's production of **"La Bohème,"** with Elena Kelessidi and Ramón Vargas as Mimì and Rodolfo and Ainhoa Arteta and Vassily Gerello as Musetta and Marcello; the conductor is Marcello Viotti. (Feb. 26 at 7:30 and March 4 at 8.) ♦ Zeffirelli's **"Turandot,"** once criticized for its gaudy portrayal of imperial Peking, has long since proved a credit to the house: it provides an accessible glamour that can dazzle an audience way up into the cheap seats. It helps, of course, that Puccini's opera, monumental even in its intimate moments, is an indestructible vehicle for powerhouse voices, which in this performance belong to Audrey Stottler (in the title role), Olivia Gorra (making her début), Richard Margison, and Robert Lloyd; Marco Armiliato. (Feb. 27 at 8.) ♦ With Adrienne Dugger replacing Gorra. (March 1 at 1:30.) ♦ For **"La Traviata,"** Zeffirelli scales down the usually elephantine grandeur of his décor to a restrained, upper-middle-class elegance—something that suits the opera's social conflicts and nervous splendor. Ruth Ann Swenson, Frank Lopardo, and Lado Ataneli (making his début, as Germont) lead the cast; Bertrand de Billy. (Feb. 28 at 8.) ♦ The power couple Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna take the leading roles in a revival of Peter McClintock's production of Gounod's **"Faust,"** with James Morris as Méphistophélès; de Billy. (March 3 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

DICAPO OPERA
A concert presentation of favorite verismo selections (from "Fedora," "L'Amico Fritz," and other operas) follows a staged performance of **"I Pagliacci"** that features Adam Klein, Marcie Ley, and Oziel Garza-Ornelas in the leading roles. The conductors are Louis Salemno and Pacien Mazzagatti. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 67th St. 212-288-9438. Feb. 28 and March 1 at 8 and March 2 at 4.)

AMATO OPERA
This feisty little company's jewel-box theatre (a monument of the Lower East Side) might be just the place to take in a performance of **"Così Fan Tutte,"** one of the most intimate and emotionally complex of Mozart's operas. Anthony Amato conducts. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. March 1 at 7:30 and March 2 at 2:30. Through March 23.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
David Robertson conducts the American première of "Listening Earth" by Poul Ruders, a "symphonic drama" that started out as a meditation on a nature poem by the English poet Joseph Addison but took a darker turn after Ruders—a Danish composer of dramatic and wildly eclectic scores—learned of the events of September 11th. Music by Janáček and Brahms (the First Piano Concerto, with Peter Serkin) completes the program. (Feb. 26-27 at 7:30 and Feb. 28 and March 1 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
Roger Norrington, who last season persuaded the orchestra to play Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" in "pure tone" (without vibrato), makes a small retreat to the music of Mendelssohn, conducting the "Reformation" Symphony, the String Symphony No. 12, and the First Piano Concerto (with Robert Levin). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 27 at 8.)

VOICES OF ASCENSION
The renowned professional chorus, led by Dennis Keene, offers a concert of Tallis, Byrd, Palestrina, Lassus, and Josquin. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 212-358-1469. Feb. 27 at 8.)

"SOUNDS FRENCH" FESTIVAL: MANHATTAN CHAMBER SINFONIA
Jean-Bernard Pommier launches this ambitious monthlong festival of things French by conducting the Manhattan School of Music's chamber orchestra in a program of Debussy, Bizet (the Symphony in C Major), Dutilleux ("Mystère de l'Instant"), and Fauré (the Ballade for Piano and Orchestra, with Pommier at the keyboard). (Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Feb. 28 at 8. No tickets required. ♦ 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 2 at 3.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM
Guest director Ingrid Matthews, the violinist who heads up Seattle Baroque, takes Andrew Parrott's exceptional early-music group for a spin through the Italian string repertory, leading her colleagues in string concertos by Vivaldi (the Concertos for Four Violins in D Major and B Minor), Marini, Corelli, and Geminiani ("La Folia"). (Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 212-717-9246. Feb. 28 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA
Steven Sloane's tenure as the A.C.O.'s music director has barely begun, but he's already shaken things up by embracing the kind of radical eclecticism you'd be much likelier to find at Miller Theatre. After starting off last fall with a concert of Psalm settings by Babbitt, Lang, and Harbison, he ventures further afield with a program that combines the first American performances of three works by Frank Zappa (including "The Dog Breath Variations/Uncle Meat" and the orchestral version of "Peaches en Regalia") with world pre-

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mières by three emerging talents, Dan Coleman, Hsueh-Yung Shen, and Brian Robison. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 2 at 3.)

"FANTASTIC VOYAGES: THE GENIUS OF HECTOR BERLIOZ"
When Colin Davis emerged as a major Berlioz interpreter in the sixties, his stylish, limber, and flawlessly paced performances had some invigorating competition from those of the suave Charles Munch, the nonchalant Beecham, and the volcanic Bernstein; in a less abundant age Davis's gifts seem all the more rare, and he is at the center of Lincoln Center's Berlioz bicentennial. In the first of three concerts, Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra offer the viola concerto-cum-symphonic poem "Harold in Italy" (with Paul Silverthorne) and the "Symphonie Fantastique." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. March 4 at 8.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Christoph Eschenbach conducts music by Berlioz, Shostakovich (the Symphony No. 5), and Oliver Knussen (the New York première of the Violin Concerto). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 4 at 8.)

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR AND CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA
With the recent installation of the respected conductor Johannes Somary as director of music, St. Patrick's has taken a decisive step to maintain its place as a center for musical excellence. His son Stephen Somary takes the podium for the latest concert by the choir and period-instrument ensemble, a rare offering of Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 2, "Lobgesang" ("Hymn of Praise"). (Fifth Ave. at 51st St. March 4 at 8. For preferred seating, call 212-753-2261, ext. 274; the remaining seats will be free and open to the public.)

RECITALS

ALBAN BERG QUARTET
The matchless Viennese foursome offers quartets by Haydn, Janáček, and Beethoven (the "Serioso"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 26 at 7:30.)

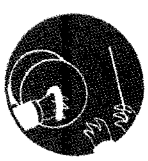
COMPOSERS' CONCORDANCE
The new-music collective presents its most intriguing concert of the year, a mess of Martin Bresnick ("Songs of the Mouse People," after a story by Kafka), Kaija Saariaho, Ben Johnston, and others along with a classic by Virgil Thomson (the String Quartet No. 2). (Washington Square United Methodist Church, 135 W. 4th St. 212-564-4899. Feb. 26 at 8.)

GARRICK OHLSSON: "BUSONI AT THE KEYBOARD"
Ohlsson—a big guy whose clearheaded curiosity is matched with an effortless, athletic technique—is perhaps the ideal pianist to illuminate the sometimes shadowy world of Busoni's music, an ambiguous mélange of Classical grace, Romantic mystery, and modernist abstraction. In the second of three concerts, Ohlsson performs several of Busoni's smaller keyboard works (including a piano version of the Elegy from his opera "Turandot") along with arrangements by Busoni of works by Bach and Liszt, the two composers he most revered. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Feb. 26 at 8.)

YING QUARTET: THE "LIFEMUSIC" PROJECT
The young American quartet, one of the resident groups at Symphony Space, teams up with the dancer Naomi Goldberg and the actress Barbara Feldon (who will read a selection of poetry by Whitman, Hopkins, and Walcott) on a program featuring Shostakovich's Twelfth Quartet (one of the triumphs of the composer's fifteen) and two incisive works by Augusta Read Thomas, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's young composer-in-residence. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Feb. 28 at 8:30.)

CARNEGIE HALL RECITALS
March 1: Richard Goode offers a program of Byrd, Beethoven (the Sonata No. 30), Mozart, Chopin, and Debussy (including several "Préludes"). ♦ March 2: Angelika Kirchschlager and Simon Keenlyside make their Carnegie Hall recital débuts with the pianist Graham Johnson—whose incomparable knowledge of the repertory is evident in their carefully selected program of lieder by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Cornelius, and Wolf. ♦ March 3: Tired of hearing the Franck Violin Sonata? Gidon Kremer (along with the pianist Naida Cole) explores the breadth of French style in his invaluably iconoclastic way, finishing a recital of music by Ysaÿe, Messiaen, and Satie with a violin-and-piano arrangement of the Symphony in D Minor. (212-247-7800. All concerts begin at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL NOTES



STRING THEORY
In the course of inventing the string quartet, Haydn molded it into a genre that embodied an Enlightenment ideal of civility—four voices engaged in stimulating conversation. Since then, composers have been variously civil or uncivil, and Julia Wolfe belongs to the latter group. Her powerful one-movement works, which combine the violent forward drive of rock music with an aura of minimalist serenity, use the four instruments as a big guitar, whipping psychedelic states of mind into frenzied and ecstatic climaxes. **"Julia Wolfe: The String Quartets,"** a new album on Cantaloupe, is a showcase for the three she's written so far, their differing temperaments perfectly matched to the distinctive talents of three young American groups. Ethel, downtown's reigning string ensemble, revels in the rough energy of "Dig Deep"; the Cassatt String Quartet's gentler mien is happily suited to "Four Marys," a rich and joyful work influenced by Wolfe's love of the Appalachian dulcimer; and the Lark Quartet dispatch "Early That Summer," a trenchant essay tethered somewhere between Beethoven and Janis Joplin, with gleaming sound and punchy, athletic rhythms.

The quartets of Robert Schumann, another radical, lie at the opposite extreme: they want to be songful, symphonic, and suggestive all at once, and their protean demands scare most ensembles away. But the **Zehetmair Quartet**, led by the violinist Thomas Zehetmair, is fully up to the challenge, and the group's new recording of the First and Third Quartets, on ECM, has the force of revelation. Zehetmair and his young colleagues (who gather several times a year for intense, marathon rehearsal sessions and play their concerts from memory) use extreme contrasts of tempo, tone color, and articulation to bring maximum intensity to Schumann's mercurial moods while somehow retaining a vision of the whole.

If all of this excitement demands a detour, then spend some time with the **Talich Quartet**, which plays Dvořák's "American" Quartet (on Calliope) with a relaxed tonal richness and a hint of melancholy that American groups never seem to pick up on, or with the **Martinů Quartet**, another Czech band, whose recent release of its favorite composer's invigorating Third and Sixth Quartets (along with some charming smaller pieces) is the crowning glory of a three-disk traversal of Martinů's quartets on the increasingly indispensable Naxos label.

—*Russell Platt*

OPUS 21: "MUSIC WITHOUT BOUNDARIES"
A vibrantly broad-minded new-music group makes its début with an evening of music by Larsen, Bolcom, Bermel, and Richard Adams, among others, along with two New York premières by the late Sir Roland Hanna. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 1 at 8.)

"SOUNDS FRENCH" FESTIVAL
The best of new French music (by a diverse group of composers young and old) comes to New York for a month of concerts, unified by a commitment to the eternally Gallic values of rationality and refinement. March 1 at 8: The festival's official opening night is a tribute to Gérard Grisey (1946-98), the composer who founded the aesthetic of "spectralism"—the computer-manipulated transformation of sound color into musical structure. Ensemble Sospeso, a superb young group devoted to European modernism, takes up the cause at Miller Theatre, performing the American premières of two works, "Jour, Contre-Jour" and "Vortex Temporum." (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.) ♦ March 1 at 8: The Tokyo String Quartet performs two French classics, the Quartet in G Minor by Debussy and "Ainsi la Nuit" ("Thus the Night") by Henri Dutilleux, a senior composer whose expressive generosity has been a vital counterweight to the dominance of Pierre Boulez. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ March 4 at 8: Speculum Musicae offers "The Spectral Generation," a concert devoted to Grisey's young successors, which includes music by Philippe Leroux, Hugues Dufort, Philippe Hurel, and Marc-André Dalbavie ("Diadèmes"), a composer increasingly popular with American orchestras. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800 SERIES: MAGNIFICAT
The series' latest concert features the New York début of this San Francisco-based ensemble of voices and Baroque instruments, who offer a Vespers service by the seventeenth-century composer and nun Chiara Margarita Cozzolani. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. March 2 at 4.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"MY DAILY CONSTITUTION"
The Los Angeles-based artist Linda Pollack has brought five thousand copies of the U.S. Constitution to town, and she's turning ordinary venues (bars, theatres, museums) into what she calls Constitution Cafés. Her programs begin with a talk by a constitutional scholar and end with a debate in which audience members are encouraged to speak their minds. As an aid to that end, Pollack says, her copies of the Constitution are "printed on good paper, none of that parchment that can't handle scribbling in the margins." Upcoming sessions tackle such topics as citizenship (Remote Lounge, 327 Bowery; Feb. 26 at 7), religious pluralism (Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 90 Orchard St.; Feb. 27 at 7), and self-censorship and the First Amendment (Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn; Feb. 28 at 6:30). (For more information, call 212-946-1849.)

READINGS
Feb. 26 at 7: The poet Dana Goodyear and the novelist Bruce Jay Friedman read from their contributions to the latest issue of *Open City* magazine. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 2 at 3: David Knowles offers passages from his forthcoming novel about the painter Amedeo Modigliani in an afternoon program that also includes the poet Todd Colby and the novelist Reed Farrel Coleman. (Sunny's, 253 Conover St., Red Hook, Brooklyn. 718-625-8211.) ♦ March 3 at 6:30: Lydia Davis, Wayne Koestenbaum, and Eliot Weinberger read their selections from "The Next American Essay." John D'Agata, the anthology's editor, is the host. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 212-229-5611.) ♦ March 4 at 8: Bill Cullen reads from his memoir, "It's a Long Way from Penny Apples." (Rocky Sullivan's, Lexington Ave. between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Feb. 28 at 7:30: The English professors Maurice Charney and Daniel Leary discuss Shakespeare's and Shaw's Cleopatras. (American Irish Historical Society, Fifth Ave. at 80th St. For reservations, which are required, call 212-288-2263.) ♦ March 3 at 6: Dr. James Watson, the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, remarks on his fifty years with the double helix. (Science, Industry, and Business Library, Madison Ave. at 34th St. 212-592-7000.) ♦ March 4 at 6:30: The curator Nancy Spector introduces the artist Matthew Barney, who will talk about creating his five "Cremaster" films. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587.)

MOVIES OPENING

BOLIVIA
Adrián Caetano directed this social-realist drama set in Buenos Aires about an illegal Bolivian immigrant who works in a diner. In Spanish. Opening Feb. 26. (Film Forum.)

CRADLE 2 THE GRAVE
An action film in which a gang leader (DMX) and a Taiwanese intelligence agent (Jet Li) form an alliance to find the gangster's kidnapped daughter. Andrzej Bartkowiak ("Romeo Must Die") directed. Opening Feb. 28.

FOREIGN SISTER
Dan Wolman's drama tells of a middle-class Tel Aviv housewife who hires an Ethiopian Christian to be her maid. In Hebrew. Opening Feb. 28. (Quad Cinema.)

HORNS AND HALOS
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Feb. 28. (Cinema Village.)

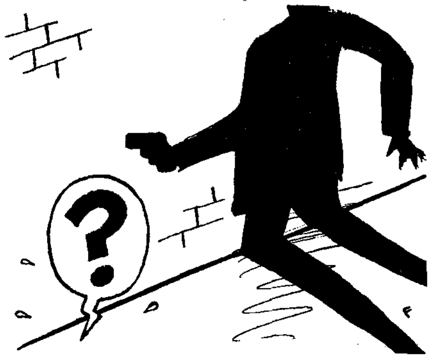
SPIDER
Ralph Fiennes plays a London man released from a mental institution, in a psychological drama directed by David Cronenberg. With Lynn Redgrave, Miranda Richardson, and Gabriel Byrne. Opening Feb. 28. (Angelika Film Center.)

FILM NOTES

ALL THE REAL GIRLS
For his follow-up to "George Washington," the young director David Gordon Green has turned his gaze upon a quiet mill town in North Carolina. You can tell the place is quiet because Paul (Paul Schneider) enjoys a reputation as its most carousing and cavalier stud. In fact, Paul is a nondescript time-waster of twenty-two, a blunt boy whose best friend is really his mother (Patricia Clarkson). Having tasted and discarded half the local womenfolk, Paul is nonplussed when he finds himself falling for, and then two-timed by, Noel (Zooey Deschanel). Green presents this as an education of the heart, a lyrical act of persuasion that is backed up by random shots of sunsets and tumbling creeks. To the rest of us, it looks like comeuppance. Why the sweetly unreadable Noel should hang around the place a minute longer is anybody's guess.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/17 & 24/03.) (Angelika Film Center.)

CHICAGO
The time is the nineteen-twenties, but the setting is so stylized, so shamelessly grounded in a hundred other shows and films, that "Chicago" barely qualifies as a period piece; indeed, it merrily jabs at the celebrity-lust of our own era. Catherine Zeta-Jones is Velma Kelly, and Renée Zellweger is Roxie Hart. Each is a man-killer, and each resides in jail, plotting her defense with the silken legal help of Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). The music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb operate on the old-fashioned principle that every song should be a showstopper, regardless of whether the show should be stopped. The director, Rob Marshall, cuts away furiously during every song, and this chronic wish to glance aside makes us wonder: could the performers not weather the camera's unstinting gaze? The only player to conquer the movie is Zeta-Jones, who gets by on a full tank of unleaded oomph. The film has punch, but it never really conveys the delicious, redeeming sense that life can be lived on the hoof.—*A.L.* (1/6/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Cinema 1, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

CITY OF GOD
Just how far into your face can a movie get? This one has every intention of leaving you scalded and bruised. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it was directed by Fernando Meirelles, who tries every trick known to cameramen: freeze frames, whip pans, multiple dissolves, slow motion, double motion, any kind of motion. The object is to keep pace with his characters, the young and dispossessed of the Brazilian slums. The movie hastens roughly from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, as we watch the boys either die or grow old before their time. The result is a jolting ride, but such is the skill on show that we run the risk of being too exhilarated to notice every death; does the film convince in its plea for the forgotten poor, or are we encouraged to forget them as they fall? In Portuguese.—*A.L.* (1/20/03) (Angelika Film Center and New York Twin.)



CONFESSIONS OF A DANGEROUS MIND
Just as audiences are recovering from "Adaptation," here comes another Charlie Kaufman script. George Clooney directed, but this project is pure Kaufman: fact and fiction tossed in the blender together, with plenty of formal trickery. The story, or more precisely, the leaping-off point, is the autobiography of Chuck Barris, the producer who invented "The Dating Game," "The Newlywed Game," and "The Gong Show," which he also hosted. Then, there is this small matter of political assassinations: Barris claimed to be a C.I.A. hit man, tapped for various "wet" operations throughout his television career. Sam Rockwell plays Barris as a carnal, slightly crazed man who's also deeply insecure that he'll be remembered as a purveyor of trash. Is this what tipped him into his fantasy life? This nimble and free-spirited film doesn't say; it continually shifts perspective and plays with the mystery. In the end, it's a story of wayward ambition and an object lesson in what people will do when placed in front of a television camera. With Drew Barrymore and Julia Roberts as the duelling women in Barris's life.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

A CORNER IN WHEAT
D. W. Griffith encapsulates Frank Norris's novel "The Pit" in a handful of tableaux with this eleven-minute short for the Biograph studios—the company that became his mad-artist laboratory as he churned out one- and two-reelers from 1908 to 1913, experimenting with visual and stylistic devices that couldn't be duplicated on the stage. Within each scene the camera remains stationary as Griffith tells the tale of a ruthless plutocrat who corners the market on wheat—doubling the price of bread—but the narrative floats effortlessly among the forlorn producers of the crop, the giddy speculators, the squeezed middlemen, and their desperate customers. In a horrific instance of doggerel poetic justice, the villain meets his fate in the bowels of a granary. Griffith frames the entire film with rough-hewn, poignant images of a wheat farmer: the forgotten character in the whole economic equation.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; March 2.)

DAREDEVIL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

DARK BLUE
Another tale of crooked cops, this time set in 1992, in the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict. Kurt Russell, his good looks puffy and slumped, plays a Los Angeles police veteran who has been promoted to lieutenant by dint of dogged persistence. His partner (Scott Speedman) is learning the ropes of corruption, while the squad's boss (Brendan Gleeson) has been tangled up in them for years. The screenplay is adapted from a James Ellroy short story; we get the Ellroy smell of moral rot, but none of his momentum—these errant souls may be driven, but in circles, and they spend so much time bewailing their predicament that the cracking of crime feels like a passing hobby. Only in the last half-hour does the movie, like Los Angeles itself, ignite. Ron Shelton, the director, picks up the pace as Russell scrambles through the inferno of the King riots. With Ving Rhames as a senior policeman of surreal nobility.—*A.L.* (2/17 & 24/03) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

GANGS OF NEW YORK
Daniel Day-Lewis, returning to movies after a spell of shoemaking in Florence, disports himself with royal assurance as the voluble thug William Cutting (Bill the Butcher) in Martin Scorsese's generally unsuccessful epic about nineteenth-century gang life in New York. Wielding knife and cleaver, Day-Lewis does what he can to give this semi-coherent production some theatrical panache, but Scorsese and his screenwriters never succeed in linking together the intimate personal dramas and the endless gang war between the nativist Yankees (i.e., Protestants) and the new waves of Irish immigrants. The movie isn't boring, but it's heavy-spirited, obvious, and grisly, with an emphasis on knives and blood that borders on the fetishistic. With a sullen, stolid Leonardo DiCaprio as a young Irish immigrant eager to avenge the death of his father, Cameron Diaz as a prostitute and pickpocket, Liam Neeson as a fallen Irish leader, and Jim Broadbent as the corrupt political boss William Tweed.—*David Denby* (12/23 & 30/02) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

GERRY
Two guys called Gerry (Casey Affleck and Matt Damon) get lost in the desert in Gus Van Sant's homage to nothing happening at all, Beckett-style. After misfires like "Psycho" and "Finding Forrester," it's good to see Van Sant back on firmer, independent footing. The two actors trudge endlessly, searching for a way out of their sun-dazed nightmare, and they occasionally break the desolate silence with improvised banter. The movie is filled with shots like an extended closeup of the two Gerrys walking quietly side by side, their heads bobbing in rhythm. Stupor eventually sets in, but it's like being covered in a warm blanket.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center.)

HORNS AND HALOS
The cautionary tale of the writer J. H. Hatfield, who wrote a biography of George W. Bush entitled "Fortunate Son." The designed-for-controversy book claims that the President was arrested for cocaine possession in 1972, but it's essentially a toothless clip job. The real story of this documentary concerns the efforts of the underground publisher Sander Hicks of Soft Skull Press to republish "Fortunate Son" after the original publisher, St. Martin's Press, discovered that Hatfield was a convicted felon and pulled the book from stores. As the allegations mount, the film becomes a fascinating study of the takedown of a media pariah.—*B.D.* (Cinema Village.)

THE HOURS
It has to overcome an over-all morbidity, a fractured time sequence, and Philip Glass's intrusive, chiming score, and, amazingly, it does. Stephen Daldry directed this adaptation of Michael Cunningham's prize-winning 1998 novel, from a script by David Hare. They've fashioned a lovely, serious work—as good as any recent "literary" movie—devoted to two themes, the variety of human bonds, especially the bond of love, and the gift that the dying make to the living. Nicole Kidman gives a revelatory performance as Virginia Woolf, both in 1923, at the time of writing "Mrs. Dalloway," and in 1941, when she loaded her coat with stones and walked into a river. Julianne Moore is a depressed Los Angeles housewife in 1951, and Meryl Streep plays a contemporary New York literary editor who hopes to give a party for a poet friend (Ed Harris) dying of AIDS. The widely separated episodes fit together as surely and lightly as dancers in a Balanchine ballet.—*D.D.* (12/23 & 30/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

LOST IN LA MANCHA

This documentary, directed by Louis Pepe and Keith Fulton, offers a new twist on the age-old pleasure of watching somebody truly and sumptuously screw up. Better still, none of it is his fault. The twist is that the fall guy, in this instance, is as playful and amenable a figure as exists in modern filmmaking: Terry Gilliam, who made his name with "Monty Python's Flying Circus" and subsequently at the helm of movies such as "Brazil," "The Fisher King," and "Twelve Monkeys." Now he tries to heave into motion his long-pondered adaptation of "Don Quixote." Everything that can go wrong goes wrong, graced by a few extra glitches that even the most capricious of gods would not have dared to arrange. The combination of a Don (Jean Rochefort) so sick that he cannot dismount from his horse, Spanish weather of Biblical ferocity, and NATO jets roaring over the set would reduce most directors to despair, yet Gilliam comes up grinning. This account of his tribulations drags toward the end, but you leave with not only an admiring grasp of his Quixote-like obsession but also an absolute determination never to work in pictures. That has to be a lesson worth learning.—*A.L.* (2/3/03) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

OLD SCHOOL

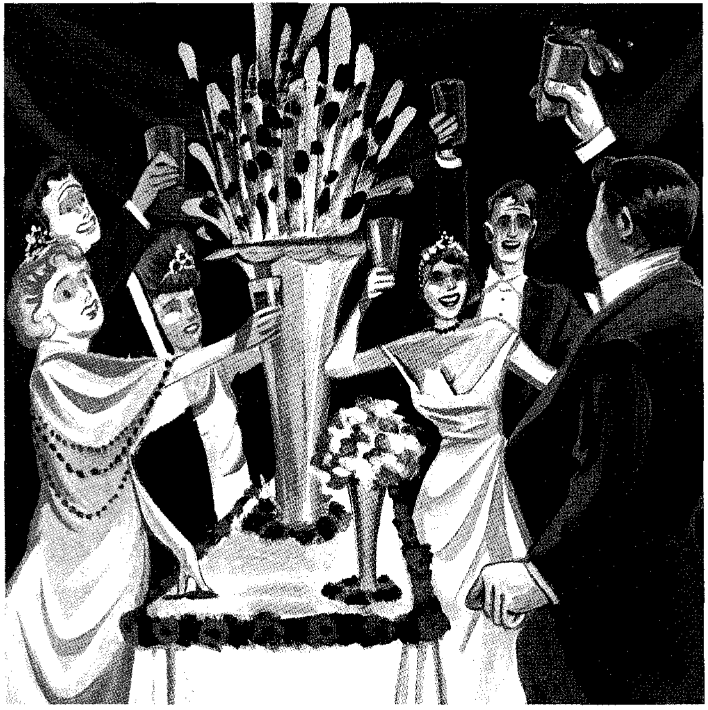
In the land of the February movie, the one-joke comedy is king. And this one has quite a joke: three thirtysomething men turn a house near a college campus into a "civilian fraternity." Luke Wilson plays the good-guy hero, and Vince Vaughn is the motormouthed instigator, but the movie belongs to Will Ferrell, the former "S.N.L." comic who goes gleefully berserk, running amok over the sets and the script (many of the best lines feel like eleventh-take improvisations). Todd Phillips, the writer-director who gave us "Road Trip," once again proves to be something of a savant at fusing the crude and the clever. Take, for example, the scene where Ferrell shoots himself in the neck with a tranquilizer dart, which ends up becoming a parody of "The Graduate." And, for fans and survivors of eighties pop music, the unusual variation the film's wedding singer puts on "Total Eclipse of the Heart" is alone worth the price of admission.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE PIANIST

Roman Polanski's drama about the survival of a real-life Polish Jew, the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman (Adrien Brody), during the grim days of the Holocaust is a movie that has been perfectly produced. The sense of scale and detail is exact, and the violence is neither exaggerated nor minimized but presented with clear-eyed accuracy. Yet this is not a work of great originality or imagination. Its protagonist lacks depth, and the theme of survival through hiding is, by its very nature, redundant. The playwright Ronald Harwood adapted the 1946 book that Szpilman wrote about his experiences without attempting to open up the hero at all. Is he ashamed, defiant, guilty? Grateful for his luck? We haven't a clue. His survival is an anomaly, a mistake, a joke—and that may be why the story appealed to Polanski. Shot largely in Warsaw.—*D.D.* (1/13/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE QUIET AMERICAN

The second adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, and, on the whole, a more successful effort than Joseph Mankiewicz's, of 1958. Michael Caine may lack the defeated nobility that Michael Redgrave brought to the role of the hero—a British journalist named Fowler—but few can beat Caine when it comes to the sad and the seedy. What is more, he squares off beautifully against Brendan Fraser. With his fine if bumbling manners, and the earnest thickness of his spectacles, Fraser is ideal as Pyle, the young do-gooder who, almost despite himself, winds up doing harm. The two men share a love for a young Vietnamese woman (Do Hai Yen), and the director, Phillip Noyce, manages not to whack us too hard with the symbolic weight of their rivalry. Greene fans, a prickly bunch at the best of times, will pick holes in the movie, but Christopher Doyle's camera, slithering through the rooms and battlegrounds of an alluring land, takes us as close as we could wish to the heart of the matter.—*A.L.* (11/25/02) (Cinema 3, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)



D. W. Griffith's "A Corner in Wheat" screens at Moving Image as part of a presentation of his Biograph shorts.

THE RECRUIT

Colin Farrell, the young Irish actor, has dark, hurting eyes, stubble on his upper lip and chin, and a slender, lithe body. He can't miss as a star, and he gives promise of knowing what he's up to as an actor. He's also the only interesting thing in "The Recruit," yet another paranoid thriller. This one is about training for the C.I.A., and it also stars Al Pacino in his domineering-satanic mode, complete with an opera-house Mephistopheles beard and glittering eyes. The Australian-born filmmaker Roger Donaldson has always been a competent director, but he doesn't have the wit to rise above a bad script, which, in this movie, leaves the unfortunate impression that the recruits are training less for intelligence work than for future appearances in action movies.—*D.D.* (1/27/03) (Battery Park 16, Cinema 2, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

ROBIN HOOD

The big, handsome Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., 1922 version, directed by Allan Dwan, and featuring extraordinarily expensive sets and Fairbanks' beautiful athletic prowess. With Wallace Beery as Richard the Lion-Hearted, Enid Bennett as Marian, and Alan Hale as Little John (the same role he played sixteen years later in the Errol Flynn version). Silent.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; Feb. 26.)

SANS SOLEIL

"Sans Soleil" is one avant-garde film that is funny, scary, emotionally involving, and intellectually exhilarating. The auteur behind this poetic 1982 documentary collage is Chris Marker, the innovative Frenchman best known here for "La Jetée" and "The Koumiko Mystery." It's narrated by a fictional cinematographer named Sandor Krasna, who wanders through Africa and his favorite country, Japan, seeking out the root beliefs and rituals that might make it possible for people to feel part of a natural historical continuity, even in a technological age. Krasna has hatched a plot for a sci-fi movie: twenty centuries in the future, a man attempts to discover the meaning of Mussorgsky's "Sunless" song cycle, which still exists in his time but is no longer comprehensible. Like Krasna (and Krasna's hero), Marker is the opposite of obscure; he's trying to elucidate the cascade of crossed signals in our own time. A montage of Japanese rail travellers and the violent, sexy, silly cartoon and movie images that flit through their minds is the most clearheaded evocation you're likely to see of fragmented contemporary consciousness. In French.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 1-2.)

SHANGHAI KNIGHTS

Owen Wilson, not yet a bankable movie star, and Jackie Chan, not ready for retirement, return for a second round of D.I.Y. stunts and business-casual wisecracks in this sequel to "Shanghai Noon." In other words, the very definition of pointless fun. Chan seems to have recovered fully from his recent run-in with Jennifer Love Hewitt, and Wilson can make even a dopey hat seem funny. To complete the trilogy, the two should make "Shanghai School" and play kung-fu gym teachers.—*M.A.* (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

25TH HOUR

A thirtyish drug dealer (Edward Norton) who is too smart for his situation gets pinched and sentenced to seven years in prison. His imminent departure produces a crisis in the lives of his best friends, a cynical Wall Street trader (Barry Pepper) and a schlubby private-school teacher (Philip Seymour Hoffman). The movie might be described as a turbulent elegy for the burnt-out hopes of a generation. There's a thriller plot buried in the material, but it's done half-heartedly. The glory of the movie is its talk—the profane New York verve of the three men, suffused with a post-September 11th bitterness. David Benioff adapted his own novel, and Spike Lee directed. Brian Cox plays the hero's father, and Rosario Dawson his girlfriend.—*D.D.* (1/13/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

TWILIGHT OF THE ICE NYMPHS

Admirers of sumptuous fantasy films like Ridley Scott's "Legend" and Michael Powell's "The Thief of Bagdad" may enjoy what the Canadian director Guy Maddin and his melodramatic scenarist George Toles can do with minuscule budgets. Maddin's first film, "Tales from the Gimli Hospital" (1988), about a smallpox epidemic at the turn of the century, was a nightmarish vision of the past (the film stock itself seemed blackened with disease). His next effort, "Archangel" (1991), was a stunning black-and-white meditation on war, filmed in the manner of the great silents. "Careful," his 1992 masterpiece, told the story of the incestuous residents of an alpine village who must remain quiet, since any loud sound might cause an avalanche. "Twilight of the Ice Nymphs" (1998) is an absurdist comedy involving woodland nymphs, ostrich farms, and a hero who searches for perfect love. It makes sensational use of some old sound effects and it's got a pastel thea-

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trical beauty that wouldn't be out of place in a Lewis Carroll tale. Maddin's films don't make much sense; they're romantic hallucinations that, at their purest, are about the joys of early cinema.—*B.D.* (Anthology Film Archives; Feb. 27-March 2.)

ALSO PLAYING

ADAPTATION (12/9/02)
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Sunshine Cinema.
AMANDLA! A REVOLUTION IN FOUR-PART HARMONY
Film Forum.
LE CERCLE ROUGE
Quad Cinema.
CHIHWASEON (PAINTED FIRE)
Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
GODS AND GENERALS
Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.
TALK TO HER (11/25/02)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

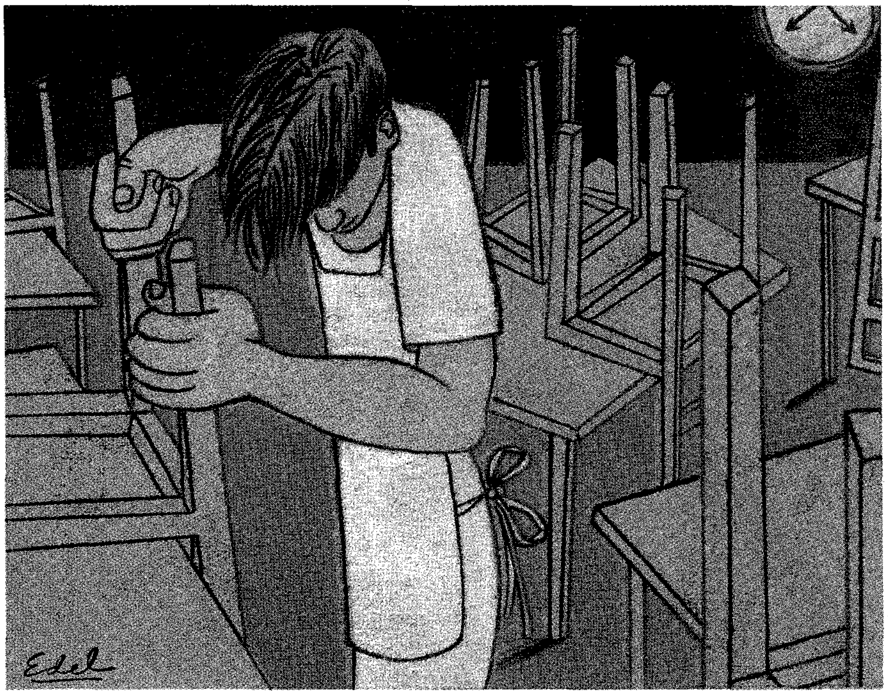
Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (212-334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

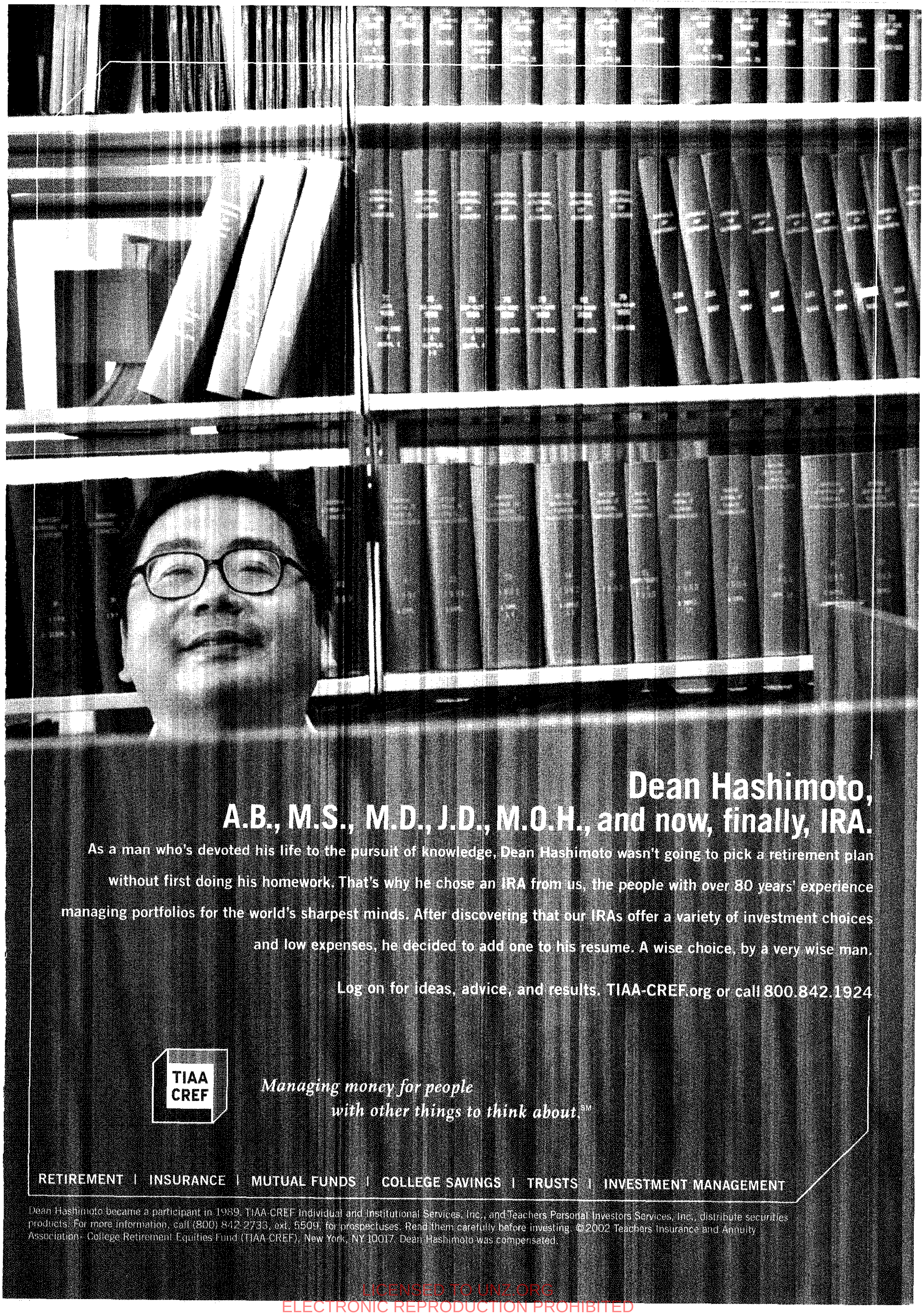
Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 30: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. March 1 at 2: "Mikael" (1924, Carl Dreyer), introduced by Armond White. ♦ March 1 at 4:15: "The Crowd" (1928, King Vidor). ♦ March 2 at 2: D. W. Griffith's Biograph shorts (†), introduced by J. Hoberman. ♦ March 2 at 4:30: *Charles Chaplin's Mutual shorts* (1917), introduced by Stuart Klawans. ♦ Repertory nights. March 1-2 at 6:30: "Performance" (1970, Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg).
ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Feb. 27-March 2: "An Idea of North: Four Films by Guy Maddin." Feb. 27 at 7:30 and March 1 at 10: "Tales from the Gimli Hospital" (1988). ♦ Feb. 27 at 9:15 and March 2 at 7:30: "Archangel" (1991). ♦ Feb. 28 at 7:30 and March 2 at 9:30: "Twilight of the Ice Nymphs" (†). ♦ Feb. 28 at 9:30 and March 1 at 7:30: "Careful" (1992).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Feb. 26 at 6:50 and 9:10: "Maids" (2000, Fernando Meirelles and Nando Olival; in Portuguese). ♦ Feb. 27 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Black Sunday" (1961, Mario Bava; in Italian). ♦ Feb. 28 at 7: "Faust" (1926, F. W. Murnau). ♦ March 1-2 at 6:50 and 9:10: "Sans Soleil" (†). ♦ March 3 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Five Dolls for an August Moon" (1970, Bava). ♦ March 4 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Buchanan Rides Alone" (1958, Budd Boetticher).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through March 27: "Fassbinder," a six-week retrospective. All films are in German. Feb. 26-27 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "Chinese Roulette" (1976). ♦ Feb. 28-March 2 at 1:45, 4:20, 7, and 9:35: "The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant" (1973). ♦ March 3 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:40, and 9:50: "Satan's Brew" (1976). ♦ March 4 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven" (1975).
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The cinematography of Raoul Coutard. Feb. 26 at 7: "Hoa-Binh" (1971, Coutard; in French without subtitles), presented by Mr. Coutard. ♦ March 4 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Drummer Crab" (1977, Pierre Schoendoerffer; in French).
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—The films of Alexander Payne. Feb. 27 at 2 and March 1 at 1: "The Passion of Martin" (1991) and "Citizen Ruth" (1996). ♦ Feb. 27 at 6 and March 1 at 3:15: "Election" (1999). ♦ Feb. 27 at 8 and Feb. 28 at 2:30: "About Schmidt" (2002). ♦ A centennial celebration of Vincente Minnelli. Feb. 28 at 6 and March 3 at 6: "The Band Wagon" (1953). ♦ Feb. 28 at 8:30: "The Bad and the Beautiful" (1952). ♦ March 3 at 8:15: "Two Weeks in Another Town" (1962). ♦ Oscar-nominated documentary feature films. March 1 at 5:45: "Bowling for Columbine" (2002, Michael Moore). ♦ March 1 at 8:30: "Daughter from Danang" (2002, Gail Dolgin and Vincente Franco). ♦ March 2 at 1: "Prisoners of Paradise" (2002, Malcolm Clarke and Stuart Sender). ♦ March 2 at 3:30: "Spellbound" (2002, Jeff Blitz). ♦ March 2 at 6:30: "Winged Migration" (2002, Jacques Perrin).
PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—French gangster films. Feb. 28-March 4: "Bob le Flambeur" (1955, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French).
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Feb. 28-March 1: "The Neverending Story" (1984, Wolfgang Petersen).
THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"New Voices Since the Eighties." March 1 at 2 and 6:45: "Exotica" (1994, Atom Egoyan). ♦ March 1 at 4 and 8:45: "The Sweet Hereafter" (1997, Egoyan). ♦ March 2 at 2 and 6:30: "Caro Diario" (1994, Nanni Moretti; in Italian). ♦ March 2 at 4 and 8:30: "The Son's Room" (2001, Moretti; in Italian).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through March 6: "The Last of the Pioneers: Allan Dwan," a twenty-film survey of the director's career. Feb. 26 at 3 and 6:15: "While Paris Sleeps" (1932). ♦ Feb. 26 at 4:30: "Her First Affair" (1933). ♦ Feb. 26 at 8: "Robin Hood" (†). ♦ Feb. 27 at 4 and Feb. 28 at 6:45: "Tide of Empire" (1928). ♦ Feb. 28 at 3: "Suez" (1938). ♦ Feb. 28 at 5 and 8:30: "Frontier Marshall" (1939). ♦ March 1 at 1:30 and March 2 at 9:15: "The Most Dangerous Man Alive" (1961). ♦ March 1 at 3:20 and March 3 at 2:30: "Rendezvous with Annie" (1946). ♦ March 1 at 5:20: "Slightly Scarlet" (1956). ♦ March 1 at 7:30: Dwan's silent Westerns (1911-16). ♦ March 1 at 9:15 and March 2 at 5:45: "The River's Edge" (1957). ♦ March 2 at 7:35 and March 4 at 2:30: "Up in Mabel's Room" (1944). ♦ March 3 at 8:30 and March 4 at 4:15: "Brewster's Millions" (1945).



Opening February 26 at Film Forum, Adrián Caetano's "Bolivia."

EDEL RODRIGUEZ



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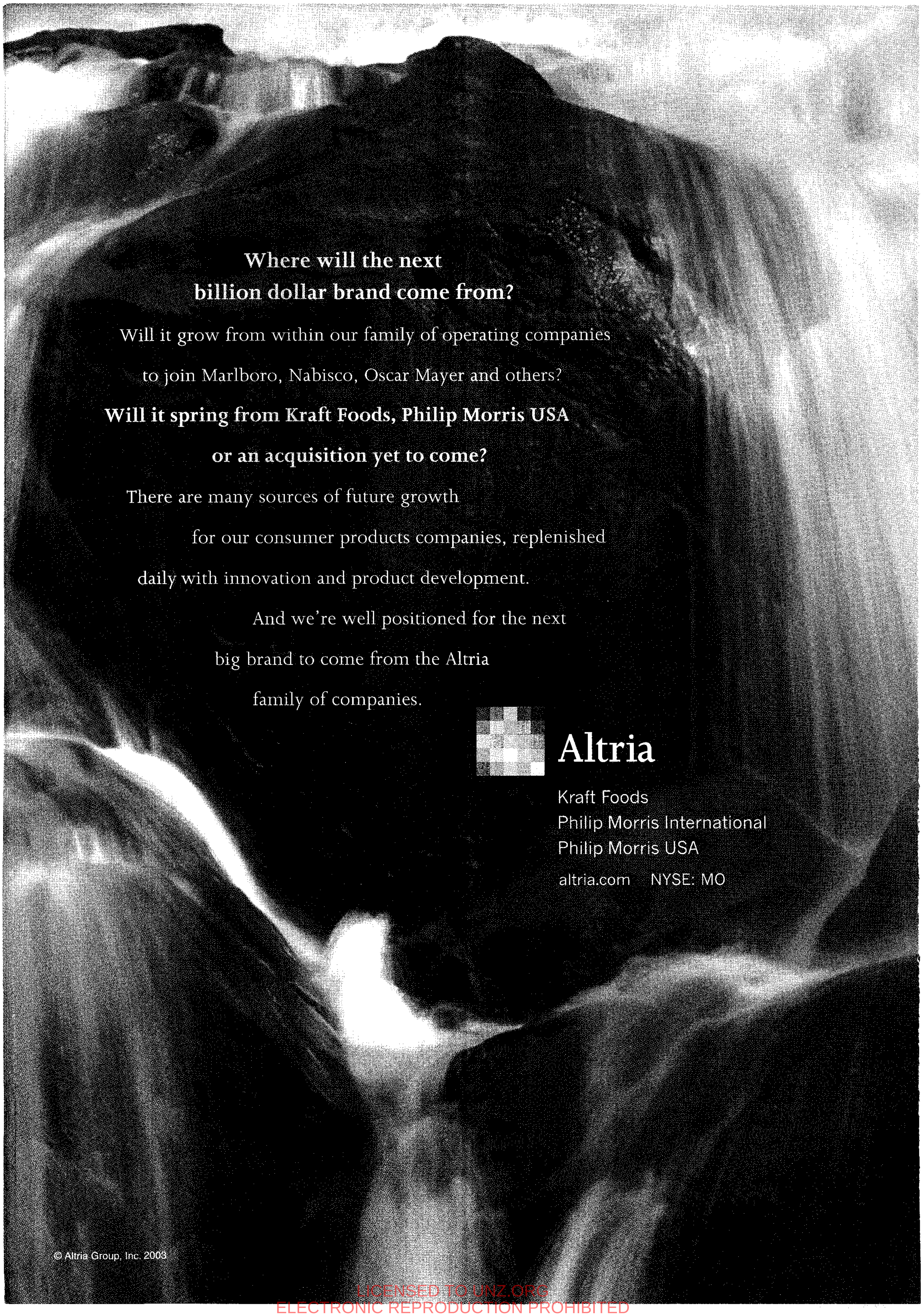

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THE NEW YORKER

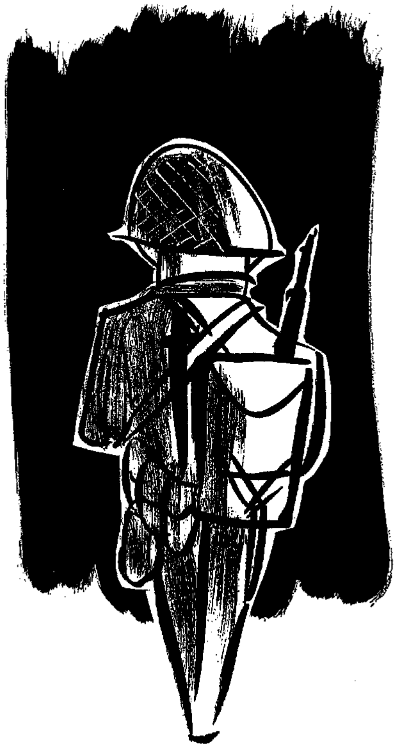
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
CLASS OF 1942

Neil MacKenna, my brother-in-law, got blown up in the fighting at Belfort Gap, in eastern France, and walked with a limp after that. Now he walks with two canes. John Brackett, Walter Ebbitt, and William (Boopa) Sturtevant, Jr., who were school or college or summertime friends of mine, died while training to fly combat planes for the Army or the Navy. Freddy Alexandre joined the Royal Canadian Air Force a year before Pearl Harbor and was killed on a Mosquito combat mission over the English Channel. Harry Blaine fell in the first wave at Saipan; our classmate Demi Lloyd, a Navy aviator, was killed there two days earlier. Orson Thomas was lost at Wake Island; Bob Nassau and Paul Carp in the Mediterranean; Allan Waite in the Southwest Pacific. Gordy Curtis, a childhood friend of my first wife, died in the Allied invasion of Sicily, in 1943, when the Army plane he was piloting was shot down by friendly fire. Three others I'd known in college (at least a little) went down in B-17 or B-24 bombers over Europe: Bill Emmet, on his fifth mission; Frank Joyce, on his eighteenth; and Robert Rand, on his forty-third. Rand had won the Purple Heart and the Air Medal with seven oak-leaf clusters. I didn't know Dirck Westervelt in college but heard about him when he dropped out after our sophomore year to enter West Point. Late for our war, he stayed on in the service as a fighter pilot and died over Seoul, Korea, in 1951, on his seventy-sixth mission. A cousin of mine, Hyozo Omori, the adopted son of my bluestocking aunt and her Japanese husband, also died at Saipan, albeit while fighting for the other side. Hyozo and I had exchanged pen-pal letters as kids.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Elsewhere in the Pacific, Larry Swift and I had tossed a coin to decide which of us would go to the Marianas and which would stay behind in Oahu and head Down Under a bit later. We were Air Force public-relations sergeants, and our job was to write stories about enlisted men for hometown papers in the States. He won the toss, and a couple of weeks afterward got into a B-25 bomber and flew a low-level mission over Tinian, to see what that was like. He was almost ten years older than I was, and curious; in New York, in peacetime, he had been a reporter with *PM,* the city's serious-minded, crusading afternoon tabloid. His plane hit a palm tree or ran into Japanese ground fire, and went in. My friend Gardner Botsford, who was an infantry officer, landed at Omaha Beach on D Day, fought in Normandy and at the Bulge and Aachen and the Hürtgen Forest, was twice wounded, and received numerous decorations, including the Croix de Guerre. He has recently written a book in which he talks about some of this, but never with pathos. He is suave and unflappable, but when there's a thunderstorm passing over his hilltop house in the Berkshires he turns pale and wears a different look.



My friend Bob Capa took the most famous combat photograph of the twentieth century—the 1936 picture of a Spanish Loyalist fighter at Córdoba falling violently backward and dropping his rifle as he takes a bullet in the head. Capa snapped more war photographs in Hankow, China, in 1938, and then in Italy and Paris and Bastogne and Leipzig in the Second World War. When the chance came in 1954 for him to go to Indochina, later known as Vietnam, to cover the fighting between the occupying French and the guerrilla forces of Ho

Chi Minh, he admitted that he was tired of wars, but took the assignment. "It's the only thing I know how to do," he said. He stepped on a mine near Thai Binh and died. In 1967, my suburban neighbor Ted Yates went to Israel as a young TV news producer for NBC, to cover what turned out to be the Six-Day War. In Jerusalem, he heard some firing, stuck his head up, and was shot dead. He left a wife and three small boys. My friend Brian Urquhart jumped out of a military plane at low altitude while in training as a British Airborne parachute trooper in 1942; his chute didn't open, but he landed in a freshly plowed field and miraculously survived. Recovered from his multiple injuries, he fought in Europe and North Africa. He became an envoy for Dag Hammarskjöld and, on a United Nations peacekeeping mission in 1961, was captured by a Katangese paramilitary force in the Congo, beaten, and held at gunpoint. As a U.N. high official, he visited wars or incipient wars over a period of thirty years, in Pakistan, Cyprus, Beirut, and elsewhere. In retirement, he is still writing about war and the difficulties of keeping peace, but he rarely talks about his own part in any of this.

The slim roster of people I've known who died or nearly died in old wars is not something I run over often in my mind, any more than I make myself think about the much larger list (it's in the tens of millions) of strangers far away who have died or suffered in wars in my lifetime, but now that this country is on the brink of a massive invasion of Iraq these old names have come back. Sometimes I feel that it's wrong to mention the friends I had who died in the service, because I was luckier than they were and had an easy time of it, all in all; my list is only a sliver compared with ones that could be drawn up by combat veterans of my age. But then there's a shift, and I feel that, as long as I can hold onto these names and glimpsed faces, their bearers will not be relegated to the abstract status of heroes or the honored dead. Maybe some of them *were* heroes, but what I feel toward them, I find, is an extreme civility, due them because they have stayed young. With seven thousand four hundred and fifty American veterans of the Second World War dying each week now, this particular form of commemoration—an ancient one, if you think about it—is going out of style. It's always bad form to talk about casualties, military and civilian, when another war is about to start, but it becomes more difficult later on, when the individual dead begin to blur amid the daunting totals. The war we were in cranked out impressive numbers near the end: a hundred and twenty thousand dead at Hiroshima, seventy-five thousand at Nagasaki, and a hundred thousand in the firebombing of Tokyo. Old stuff, to be sure. Or, rather, the same old old stuff: the Battle of Leipzig, fought by the troops of Napoleon and Blücher in 1813, produced a hundred and forty thousand dead.

In common with many others, I'm gloomy about the prospect of drifting into a future in which nightmare regimes like Iraq's brandish terrifying weapons (germ warfare, poison gas, nuclear bombs) with impunity, and I'm apprehensive about fighting a war with few friends at our side, unforeseeable consequences, and no idea of the potential casualties to be suffered and inflicted. I can find no poll of my dwindling fellow-G.I.s to help me out here. Other numbers are clearer. With a hundred and sixty-five thousand American troops and military forces already in place, the Pentagon has leaked its plan of attack, beginning with the launching, in the first two days, of three thousand precision-guided bombs and missiles against Iraq—ten times the number fired during the first two days of the Gulf War. "This is not going to be your father's Persian Gulf War," one Pentagon official said, and it's probably true that after an attack of such speed and weight and awe only the dead and the shattered streets around them will bear the old stamp or look of war—if, indeed, we at home are allowed to see such scenes. In a separate announcement, the Pentagon let it be known that it had ordered fifteen thousand eight hundred and ninety body bags, not all of them immediately destined for the Persian Gulf. None are for use by the enemy.

—*Roger Angell*

THREE AMERICAN HAIKUS BY JACK KEROUAC

A raindrop from
the roof
Fell in my beer

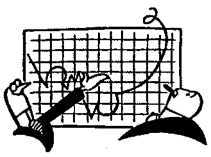
•

The new moon
is the toe nail
Of God

•

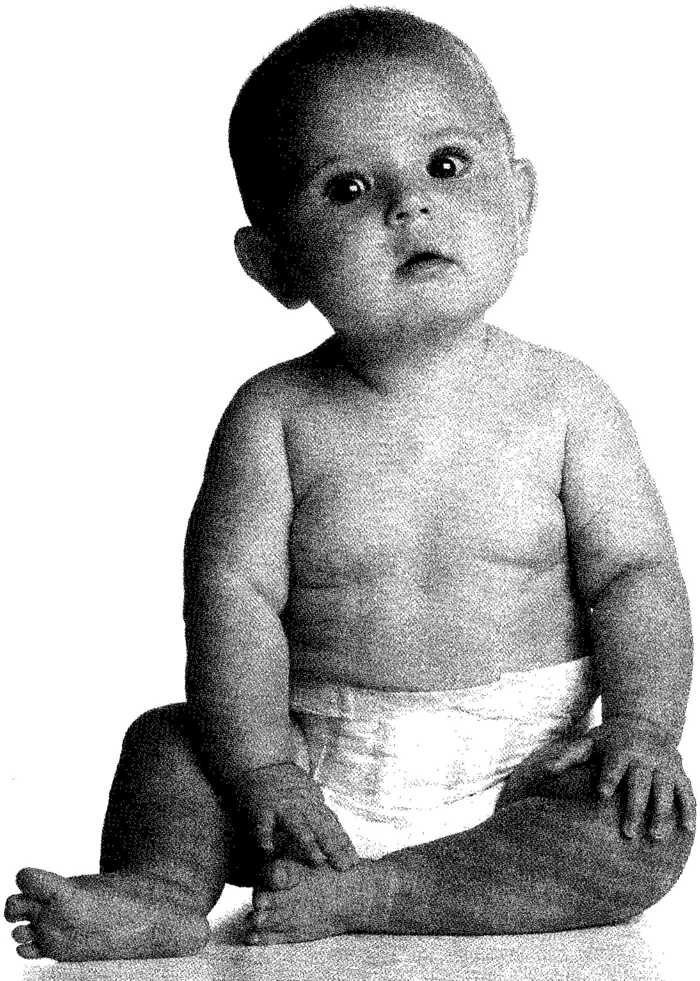
Run over by my lawnmower,
waiting for me to leave,
The frog

CHATTER
ORANGE AND WHITE



Weird week. Weird, weird week, passing from alert orange to heavenly white and back to the usual muddle of slush. People keep trying to "gauge public opinion" at this moment of crisis. Fortunately, though, in the past year in New York we've had on hand a machine that can tell you what the world is thinking—that actually listens to the world, reads its mind, and tells you exactly what's up in there. The machine, a Jimmy Neutron assemblage of display monitors and loudspeakers and copper wire, is the brainchild of a Bell Labs statistician named Mark Hansen and a sound designer and artist named Ben Rubin, and for most of the past year you could find it in a loft on the Bowery,

NEW & IMPROVED?



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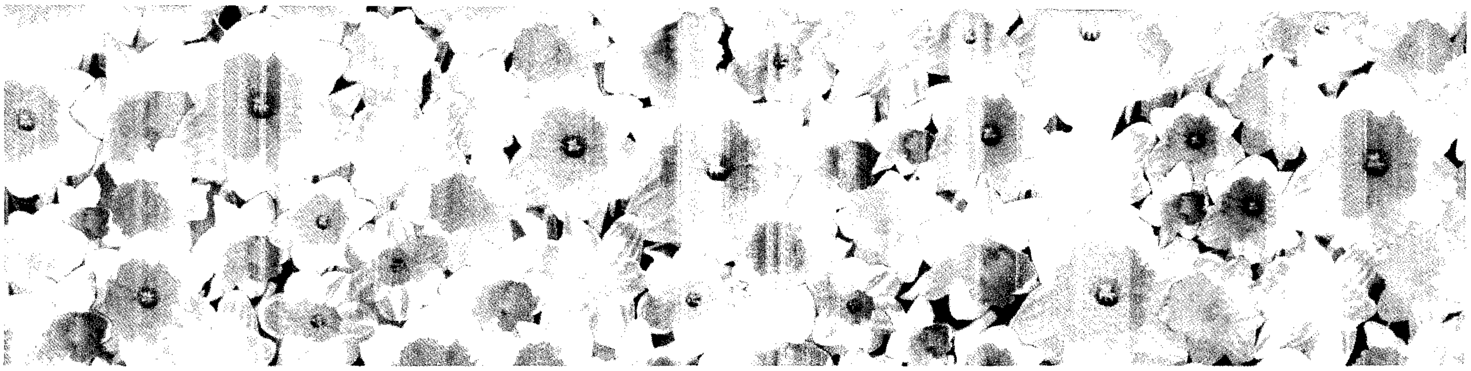

DISCOVER THE DNAGE

A year to remember, 1953 ushered in Little Ricky's birth, Stalin's death, Queen Elizabeth's coronation and the end of the Korean War. But the biggest story of all was told in three little letters — DNA. Now, 50 years after the discovery of DNA's double helix shape, visionary artists add their own twist, inviting you to consider new perspectives on such hot topics as cloning, "designer children" and the elimination of aging. Visit the provocative exhibitions of this citywide festival and join the debate.

From Code to Commodity: Genetics and Visual Art

February 13 to April 11
New York Academy of Sciences
2 East 63rd Street
(212) 838-0230

An exhibition of paintings, prints and works in other media by 13 artists who address the ways in which human cells and genes are becoming commercial products.

Women in Science (Genomically Yours)

February 22 to March 22
Universal Concepts Unlimited
507 West 24th Street
(212) 727-7575

Five women artists present works of art exploring the implications of recent genetic breakthroughs in an exhibition dedicated to Rosalind Franklin, the pioneering molecular biologist whose research was critical to uncovering the double-helix structure.

Seeking the Secret of Life: The DNA Story in New York

February 24 to August 29
The New York Public Library
The Science, Industry and Business Library
188 Madison Avenue at 34th Street
(212) 592-7000

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, The Rockefeller University, and The New York Public Library trace the history of genetic advances made in New York laboratories through an array of historic artifacts, photographs, news articles and correspondence drawn from their collections.

Genomic Issue(s): Art and Science

February 25 to April 5
Gallery of the CUNY Graduate Center
365 Fifth Avenue at 34th Street
(212) 817-7394

An international roster of 30 artists is featured in a survey of contemporary art that addresses such issues raised by genetic research as the uses of genetic testing, new definitions of race, and the unprecedented challenges posed to our medical system and spiritual beliefs.

How Human: Life in the Post-Genome Era

February 28 to May 25
International Center of Photography
1133 Avenue of the Americas
at 43rd Street
(212) 857-0000

Thirty contemporary artists and photographers respond to issues of cloning, race, aging, genetic identification, genetically modified food, and transgenic breeding, all raised by ongoing innovations in biotechnology.

Brave New World

March 4 to March 28
Organization of Independent Artists
19 Hudson Street at Reade Street
(212) 219-9213

Works by young and emerging artists, many of which are newly commissioned, all of which respond to the genetic revolution.

Above: Peter Dayton, *Untitled (Daffodils)* (detail), 2002,Courtesy the artist and Winston, Wachter, Mayer Fine Art. Left: Catherine Chalmers, *Genetically Engineered Mouse (Pigmented Nude)*, 2000, Courtesy of the artist; RARE Gallery; International Center of Photography

THE DNAGE

CITYWIDE FESTIVAL FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE DOUBLE HELIX

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where you could drop in on it if you knew it was there. For the past couple of months, though, it has been on loan to the Whitney Museum of American Art, and in a rough week it was a pleasure to sit in the dark and listen.

The machine, or "Listening Post," as it is called, works in a way that would be hard for an anxiety-ridden computer-illiterate type to understand even if the alert level were back down to Clinton-era cheap-dress blue, but basically the idea is this: Hansen and Rubin have written a program that allows them to probe into all the unrestricted Internet chat rooms in the English-speaking world and dredge up thousands upon thousands of random sentences even as they are being typed. The casual remarks, desperate pleas, and lecherous queries that are sucked out of the stream of world chatter are then relayed in various ways on the two hundred or so small screens and ten loudspeakers that make up the machine's public face. The found words and sentence fragments can be strung out at random on the display monitors or made to race across the screens in constant streams, like a Times Square zipper, giving the thing a Jenny Holzer-like gnomic and oracular quality. Better yet, a speech synthesizer can read aloud from the found chatter—either intoning words and sentences one by one in a sepulchral English announcer's voice or chanting and singing them in fuguelike overlay.

Quite often, the sequences of words and sentences are meaningless, but frequently they take on striking shapes. Two weeks ago, for instance, the machine produced a kind of found poem on the theme of "orange" and duct tape:

WARNING: CODE ORANGE
whered my ORANGE go?
And plastic sheeting!
duct tape and plastic
people tape ducks now
President PlasticWrap
Who's got DUCK TAPE!?
buy stock in duct tape
duct tape and lingerie

From fear to affirmation, or at least sex, in nine lines. Other sequences had a more Joycean flow. Finnegans Terror Alert: "Duct tape and plastic for the White House duct tape, and water in the bathtub, eheh hmmm, i got to wear my orange shoes again i like orange and yellow and pink and red its all a plot by saranwrap and duct tape mcm . . . we always have duct tape . . . always."

When the machine was set to take in whole sentences, one found, unsurprisingly, that the music of the world's mind was less monstrous than mundane. At the height of the terror alert, some found remarks were crass ("if a womans breasts look like two oranges stuffed in a tube sock ill tell em"), others explanatory ("the plastic bags are to cover the windows in case of chemical or bio warfare"), still others darkly ironic ("damn if only the wtc used duct tape on the windows we wouldn't be in this mess"). Some people were eager for instruction ("they are saying the alert level is 'High' . . . . . is that orange, red, or purple??"), others eager to instruct ("I looked, duct tape and plastic sheeting don't have a product expiration date"). A few were truly panicky ("Does anyone know how to get duct tape glue off a dog??").

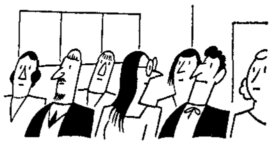
No one, not Hansen or Rubin or even the machine, knows where any of this is coming from. The man with duct tape on his dog may be an anxious New Zealander or he may be the President himself. What Hansen and Rubin have learned, though, is that even at moments of extreme crisis the music of the world's mind is remarkably constant: there is a steady bass line of lust ("I am naked, I like my naked butt"), a middle range of appetite ("I like smoked salmon"), and a high tremolo of keening anxiety. The world, it seems, is ruled by sex and worry; mankind's two passions are to be safe and satisfied, at once upright and laid. Even when most of us are trembling on orange alert, someone somewhere is trembling at the thought of sharing a chat room with a Swedish teen-ager unencumbered by shame or parents.

When it started snowing outside, the machine was snowing, too, as all that snow passed through all those millions of minds. Some people were indignant ("NE people are a bunch of pansies! Here in North Western Montana, we've been getting snow like that forever. You environmental pukes screwed up the East and now want to do the same out here. I think we need to put a pack of wolves in central park"), while others used the occasion to focus on the news that really counts ("I don't know, I would probably throw his butt out in the snow and take 60% of what he was worth. If you can't be honest and tell your spouse that you want out, then you deserve to have half of your possessions removed. You don't deserve to be murdered, but I suppose that is a risk you take when you make a fool out of your spouse").

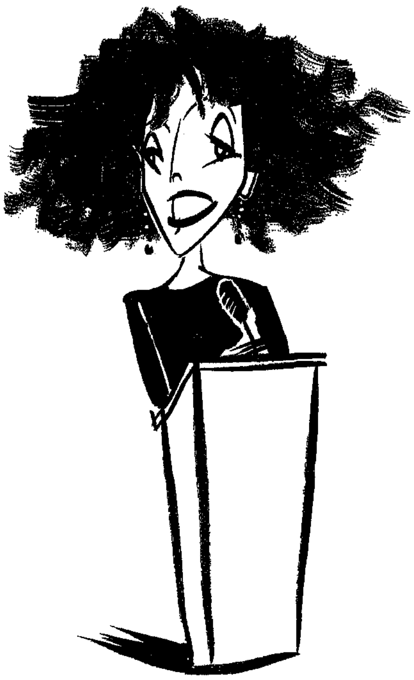
By last Wednesday, though, even the snow had passed out of the machine, along with all that orange, and the world was back to its usual muddle of fear ("When people refer to Israelis as Zionists . . .") and appetite ("I am looking for a girl who wants . . ."). Leaving the Whitney for the slushy, springlike street outside, one felt that the inside of all of our heads had, for a moment at least, returned, like the city itself, to the world's true colors, gray and green.

—*Adam Gopnik*

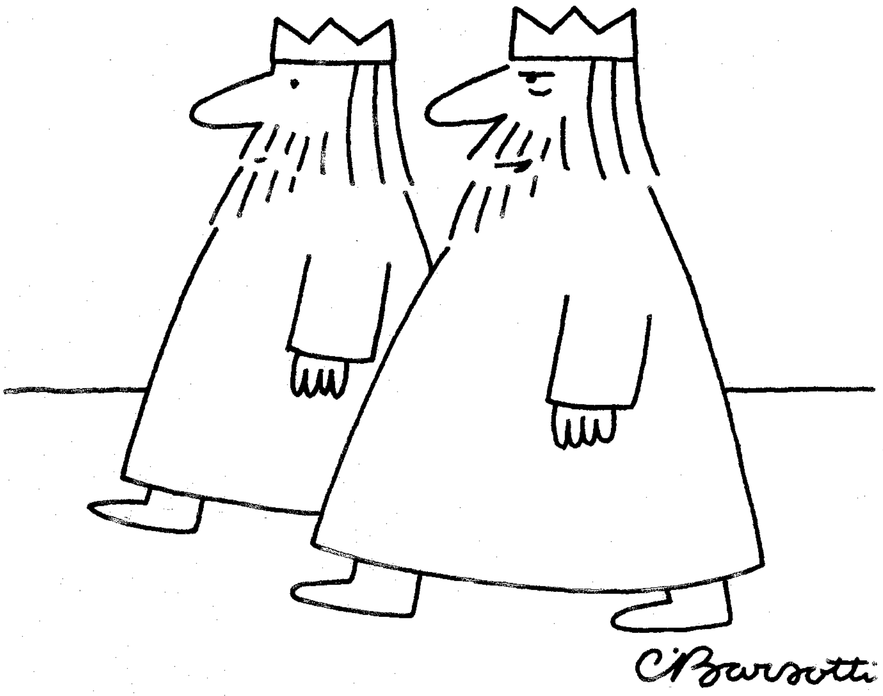
HOW-TO DEPT.
THE BIG TIME MADE EASY



One recent evening at the Omni Berkshire Place Hotel, in midtown, sixty would-be producers and writers crowded into a conference room to attend a two-hour seminar given by the producer Jean Doumanian. The event, entitled "Learn How to Get Your



Jean Doumanian



"My loyal opposition wasn't loyal enough."

Play or Movie Produced," was sponsored by the Learning Annex, so the audience was naturally expecting that all doors would be opened, all secrets revealed.

Doumanian, a slim woman of sixty-eight, is a producer of Broadway's "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" and the new film "All the Real Girls." The evening was mostly questions and answers, as Doumanian's presentation—an impressionistic tour of her résumé—ended after seven minutes. When a question perplexed her, she frowned and batted at the bangs that hang over her eyes like a birdcage cover.

Believe in your stories, she declared several times, and then find the right people to fund and realize them. In Doumanian's case, those people were her wealthy boyfriend, Jaqui Safra, and Woody Allen. That trilateral relationship began in 1993, when Doumanian used a small part of Safra's fortune to bankroll Allen's film "Bullets Over Broadway," and ended eight films later, in 2001, when Allen sued her and Safra, claiming he'd been cheated out of about fifteen million dollars. (The suit, and her counterclaim, were quietly settled.)

A path like hers—first, befriend a world-famous director; then date a zillionaire—is not for beginners. A woman wearing a wool headband started things off by asking how to find a distributor for her film.

"Try to get a European sales agent," Doumanian suggested. "There's a fellow named John Sloss—"

"How do you spell it?"

"I don't know," Doumanian said. "I've never worked with him."

"Do you have to prepare a treatment if you're pitching a script?" a man asked.

"If you write a treatment as well as you write a screenplay, yes," Doumanian said.

"Do you need an agent?" someone else asked.

"An agent is best to have, but most people can't get an agent. If you have a very successful play, you can get an agent." Demystifying Hollywood still further, Doumanian explained, "Everybody can open a movie until they can't. John Travolta was hot, and then he wasn't, and then he was again. There's a pyramid." She made a steeple of her index fingers. "Over here is people on the way up. Over here, on the way down."

A playwright inquired how to get his play produced. "Take the bull by the horns," Doumanian replied. When pressed, she suggested starting with well-known producers, then trying nonprofit theatres, and, should those avenues fail, staging a small reading. Where, exactly, could you stage a small reading, someone asked. Doumanian tried to think. She turned to her public-relations handler: "Liza? Um, Lisa—do you know that small theatre downtown?"

"No."

"It's with Mandy . . ."

"Patinkin?"

"No," Doumanian said. "No."

"How do you find these producers' names?" a woman in back cried. "Is there a Rolodex somewhere?"

"The Internet is wonderful," Doumanian said. "You can probably find out everything on the Internet. I don't know how to go about that myself."

A young woman in a red suit raised her hand. "It said in the little blurb that we could pitch our ideas and you'd give us feedback?"

"I beg your pardon! Really?" Doumanian frowned and called out to the Learning Annex's coördinator, "Is that true?"

"Yes."

"I never agreed to that," the producer said.

When someone asked what kinds of stories Doumanian favored, she said, "Good stories. I don't do violence, action adventure, special effects, sex." On the other hand, she acknowledged, "People loved seeing Edie Falco and Stanley Tucci nude in 'Frankie and Johnny.' And now we have Joe Pantolioni"—Pantoliano—"and, um . . ."

"Rosie," someone muttered, referring to Rosie Perez.

"Right, yes," she said.

"Do you or don't you accept unsolicited plays?" someone asked.

"I really don't."

"What's the name of your production company?" another person asked.

"Oh, no!" she said, wagging her finger cheerfully. An aspirant proposed stopping by Doumanian's office with her material. "Never stop by," she said. "Never, because we—" and she mimed giving the bum's rush.

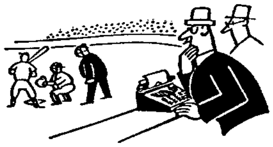
Someone asked what it was like working with Woody Allen. "I don't think we have enough time for that," Doumanian said.

Finally, a still optimistic soul wondered if you could raise production money from banks. "You can't," Doumanian said. "You used to be able to get it from insurance companies, but now you can't." Taking the audience's measure, she sighed. "You can't expect to—and this is not a reprimand—you can't expect to come to a little seminar like this for two hours and learn anything."

A few people tried to hand Doumanian scripts and plays as she fled the room, but her publicist—Liza, Lisa, whatever—pulled her out unscathed.

—*Tad Friend*

ON THE BEAT
WAITING FOR MATSUI



Yoshihiro Ando had performed the ritual of observing Hideki Matsui emerge from a sport-utility vehicle and duck into Yankee Stadium. Having been assured that Matsui would lift weights and hit baseballs for no less than four hours, he had decided it was safe to retreat to the warmth of the McDonald's on the corner of 161st Street and River Avenue. He was joined by Takahiro Horikawa, a colleague from the *Asahi Shimbun*. There seemed no risk of getting scooped, on this frigid Saturday morning, since most of the other Japanese reporters and photographers on the Matsui beat were already tucking into their Egg McMuffins and poring over the local tabs.

Matsui, a tall, handsome outfielder who hits for both power and average, signed with the Yankees in January. In Japan, this was Godzilla-calibre news. Matsui was the best and most beloved player on Japan's most popular team, the Yomiuri Giants. The idea that he would abandon the life of a deity to risk failure in New York has made for a story that is likely to dwarf the frenzied coverage of the Japanese stars who came before him, such as Hideo Nomo and Ichiro Suzuki. A few weeks ago, a Japanese sports daily hired a helicopter to capture the image of Matsui's first jog across the Stadium outfield. In the paper the next day, Matsui appeared to be little more than a dot. No matter.

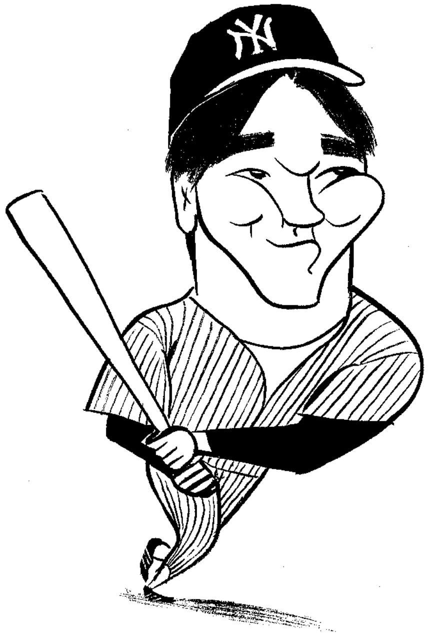
Ando arrived in town three weeks ago, on the same flight from Tokyo as Matsui. They nodded to each other on the plane (Ando, who is thirty-seven, had covered the Giants for the previous two seasons), but did not chat. Upon landing, Matsui went straight to the Stadium, to work out and get the better of his jet lag. Ando positioned himself outside the press gate and, in the company of his fifty or so competitors, waited five hours for Matsui to come out.

Spring training, in Tampa, was still weeks away; Matsui had come to New York early, in order to adjust to a new time zone and find a place to live. He was staying at the Regency, but word had it that he was looking at apartments on the Upper East Side. The apartment story, Ando and Horikawa agreed, had the makings of a nifty scoop.

"We could chase him," Ando said, laughing. "Chase his car. That's the last resort."

Ando believes there are rules about that sort of thing, though, and he was not inclined to break them. He was already worried that he might be in trouble for breaking one on his first day. The Yankees had insisted that the Japanese press corps not camp out in front of Matsui's hotel. But late on the night of his arrival Ando took a call from the home office, asking him to confirm that Matsui would play for Japan in an Olympic qualifying tournament in November. Ando told his editors that Matsui was asleep, but promised to track him down in the morning.

At eight o'clock, Ando parked himself in the lobby of the Regency. An hour and a half later, Matsui appeared. He saw Ando and asked him whether something was wrong. Ando asked his question, Matsui confirmed the story. Nothing more was said. Yet, in the silences that can approximate conversation in Japan, Ando sensed that he had compromised their relationship and that Matsui was not pleased.



Hideki Matsui

"I need to think about Matsui's feelings," he said later. He worried that he might have somehow strained Matsui's relations with the Yankees or, worse, that Matsui might think ill of him.

Some penance, some unspoken display of sincerity, was in order—which meant that, no matter how cold the morning or how flimsy the story, Ando was determined to be outside Yankee Stadium whenever Matsui came and went, if only so that Matsui would see that he had gone to the trouble.

That's what he was doing in the Bronx that recent frigid Saturday. As it happened, Ando's paper would not even be printed the coming Monday; he had no deadline to meet. Still, after almost four hours nursing coffee at McDonald's, Ando and Horikawa went back to the Stadium and took up positions near the barricade that the Yankees had set up to keep the Japanese journalists from the Stadium doors.

Matsui emerged, and his chroniclers arrayed themselves deferentially around him. "I'm getting tired of seeing you guys," he said. Everyone laughed. He kept his leather coat folded over one arm and for ten brisk minutes fielded the puffball questions about his day, his workout, his preference for Japanese food, his lingering avoidance of hamburgers. He spoke in a soft, thick voice and paused before answering, the better to assure everyone that he was giving the questions some thought.

Ando stood to the side and waited his turn. When it came, he tossed Matsui an easy one about his hitting routine. Matsui's answer was vague. But this was of no consequence.

They would all be flying down to Tampa on Monday. Ando had booked seats on four different flights to insure that he'd accompany Matsui to spring training. Perhaps this time they would get a chance to talk.

—*Michael Shapiro*

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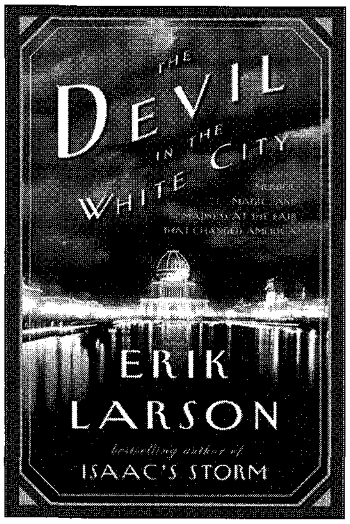

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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

INDIAN POINT BLANK

How worried should we be about the nuclear plant up the river?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

"Emergency Planning for Indian Point: A Guide for You and Your Family" is a booklet published as a public service by the plant's owner, Entergy Nuclear Northeast. Part "Hints from Heloise," part "Dr. Strangelove," the booklet has a cheerful blue cover decorated with drawings of a siren and a reactor dome. Inside, it is filled with tips like "Six Facts You Need to Know About KI—Potassium Iodide" (No. 1: it can protect your thyroid if you are exposed to radioactive iodine) and "helpful answers" to questions like "Could Indian Point explode like a bomb?" ("No. It is impossible for any nuclear power plant to explode like a bomb under any conditions.") At the back, there is an "Emergency Planning Checklist," which recommends, "If you are told to evacuate, you should bring enough personal supplies for three days," including a portable radio, potassium-iodide tablets, and "this planning booklet."

In total, Entergy printed more than two hundred thousand copies of the guide, which were mailed to households within ten miles of the plant, in northern Westchester County. Nowhere does the booklet explicitly mention sabotage, but this fear was clearly on the minds of the authors:

> Q: How can I be sure that Indian Point is secure and well-protected?
> A: Indian Point is defended by armed guards, sophisticated detection equipment and other advanced protection systems that meet or exceed federal, state and local requirements.

An attack on a nuclear power plant would seem to fulfill, almost perfectly, Al Qaeda's objective of using America's technology against it. In his State of the Union Message last year, President Bush announced that United States forces searching Afghan caves had indeed found diagrams of American reactors. Around the same time, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, acting on information provided by the F.B.I., warned of a plot to crash a commercial aircraft into a plant. According to the N.R.C., the identity of the plant was not known; a captured Al Qaeda operative had told the F.B.I. that the specific target was to be chosen by a "team on the ground."

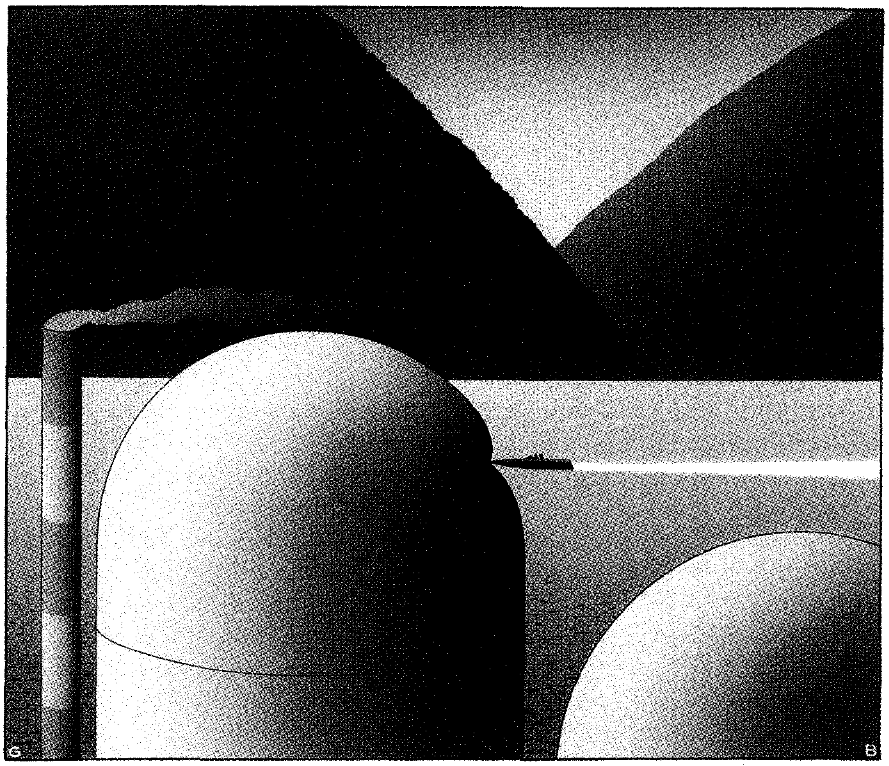
As potential targets go, Indian Point seems almost too obvious. It is situated on the Hudson River, in Buchanan, New York, some twenty miles north of the Bronx and thirty-five miles from midtown Manhattan. Nearly three hundred thousand people live within the plant's ten-mile "emergency planning zone," and another several hundred thousand reside within seventeen and a half miles, in the so-called "peak fatality" zone. More than twenty million people live within fifty miles of the plant. A 1982 analysis by a congressional subcommittee estimated that, under worst-case conditions, a catastrophe at one of the Indian Point reactors could result in fifty thousand fatalities and more than a hundred thousand radiation injuries. The same study calculated the cost of such an accident at roughly three hundred billion dollars. By an uncomfortable coincidence, American Airlines Flight 11, just minutes before it slammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center, flew almost directly over Indian Point's twin reactor domes. Apparently, the Hudson River was the landmark that the hijackers used to navigate by.

The Indian Point nuclear power plant, or energy center, as it is now called, is named after the spit of land, once home to an amusement park, on which it's built. There are two functioning reactors on the site, Indian Point 2 and 3, and a third, Indian Point 1, which has been closed for nearly thirty years. Recently, I went to Buchanan to take a look around. I had been told to report to the plant's emergency-operations facility, and when I drove up to it an armored tank was rumbling across the parking lot. Inside the facility, I was issued the first of several security badges and was introduced to Entergy Nuclear Northeast's director of emergency programs, Michael Slobodien.

Before I arrived, Slobodien had laid out a tableful of charts and diagrams, one of which was titled "Chernobyl-Indian Point Contrast." On the left side, it noted that "Chernobyl used flammable graphite for neutron control" and "did not have a comprehensive emergency plan." On the right, it said, "IP uses non-flammable water for neutron control" and has "modern emergency plans." There were also several large black-and-white photographs chronicling the construction of the reactors' four-and-a-half-foot-thick containment domes.

"This building was designed with the intent to withstand the tremendous energy of a massive release from an accident of some unknown origin," Slobodien told me, picking up one of the photographs. "We really don't care what the origin is. We just said, 'Let's assume that that happens.' Because that's kind of the worst-case situation you could envision. And, by the way, in our business everything is worst case. We always think about what is the worst that can happen, and we design to accomplish protection for the worst case." Slobodien told me that he had been one of the "responders" sent by the N.R.C. to Three Mile Island, outside Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, after the meltdown there, in 1979, and later had overseen the cleanup of the site. He explained, without a trace of irony, that, while one of the lessons of the disaster had been that "serious accidents can occur," another was that "the reactor design was successful."

Like Three Mile Island, Indian Point 2 and 3 are pressurized-water reactors. Each reactor contains a hundred and ninety-three fuel assemblies, and each assembly holds a hundred fuel rods—skinny zirconium tubes filled with pellets of enriched uranium. To produce power, the fuel rods must first be bombarded with neutrons. This sets off a chain reaction, which produces more neutrons, "fission products" like radioactive iodine, and a great deal of energy. The energy is used to heat pressurized water to 550 degrees Fahrenheit, and this pressurized water is then used to heat more water to make steam. The steam, in turn, powers a set of turbines, which, finally, generate electricity. (Together, the two reactors at Indian Point produce, on average, two thousand megawatts, or enough electricity to supply two million homes.) The chain reaction is carefully monitored and controlled; however, if, for whatever reason, heat is not carried away from the core, the fuel can melt and, in the presence of oxygen, catch fire. Depending on conditions, this can take hours or merely minutes.



"The one thing we don't want you to do is run or panic," a plant engineer said.

GUY BILLOUT

Slobodien took me down to the emergency center's control room, a large windowless office filled with computers that, ideally, should never have to be used. (In a truly catastrophic accident, the emergency-operations facility might itself have to be evacuated, which is why there is a second command center, similar to the first, twenty miles away, in White Plains.) On the walls of the room were charts listing possible disasters, like "tornado strikes a plant vital area." The charts were color-coded by type of hazard, and each calamity was further specified by a numerical designation. On a table was a detailed map of the area around the plant.

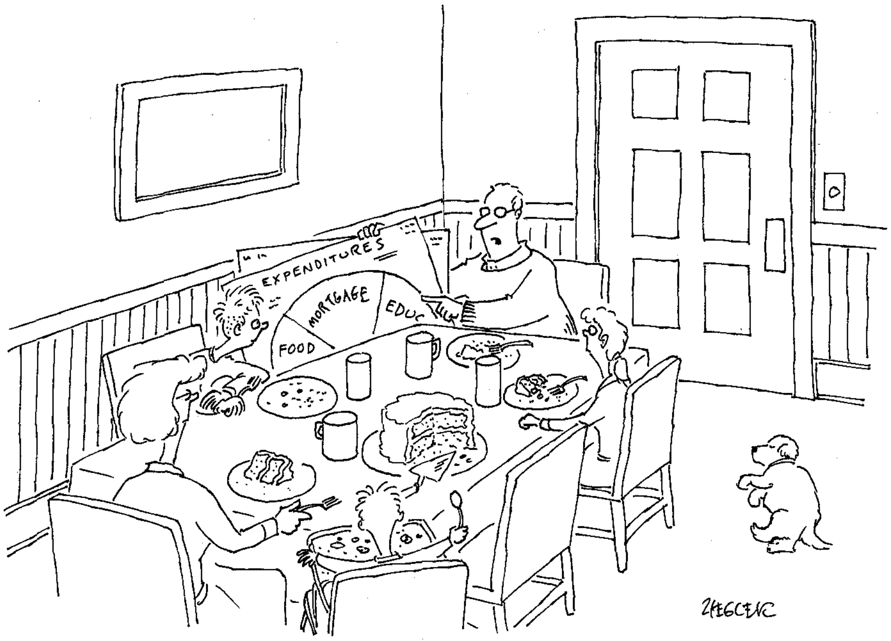
Slobodien pulled out a set of transparencies illustrating how a plume of airborne radioactive contamination would travel under various conditions. He selected one that posited a wind coming from the north with a relatively high degree of turbulence. It showed the plume travelling south in a widening band. "The areas that are most affected would be the communities of Buchanan and Verplanck"—small towns right next to the plant—"and pretty much the river," he observed, laying the transparency over the map. Slobodien said that he was distressed by diagrams put out by the plant's critics which suggest that in the event of an accident radioactivity would drift in all directions.

"It doesn't really happen that way," he explained. "The concept that everything is affected all at once is clearly not true." The control-center map showed only the area within a few miles of Indian Point, so I couldn't tell what would happen to the plume once it travelled beyond that radius. I did notice, though, that as it was widening it was headed toward New York City.

Eventually, I tried to steer the conversation around to September 11th. In the aftermath of the World Trade Center tragedy and the F.B.I. warning, public concern has tended to focus on the possibility of another aerial attack. Whether the containment domes at most plants could withstand the impact of a fully loaded 767 is a much debated question; the N.R.C. is, somewhat belatedly, looking into this matter. There are, however, also many other possible scenarios. To cool its reactors, for example, Indian Point relies on the circulation of more than a billion gallons of water a day from the Hudson. Several groups, including the Green Party of New York and the environmental organization Riverkeeper, have tried to demonstrate the plant's vulnerability by boating—or, in one case, canoeing—near the cooling-water intake pipes. One of the groups claims to have made it within fifty feet of the pipes. I asked Slobodien what would happen in the event that the pipes were blocked, or destroyed.

"A lot of these things we don't talk about in great detail, for obvious reasons," he told me. "So, when it comes to the intake, all I will tell you is that you can block the intake and you still can successfully cool the reactor. Now, would it be of concern to us? Yeah, it would be of great concern to us. We would have to shut the reactor down, and we would have to do alternative cooling techniques, which we have available to us. Yeah, it would be of great concern. We don't minimize it. But it's not the kind of thing that leads axiomatically to, you know, the end, as some people would have you believe."

In a practical sense, insuring that Indian Point operates safely is the job of its owner, Entergy, but in a broader sense this responsibility belongs to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The N.R.C. describes its primary mission as "to protect the public health and safety," and to this end it not only licenses and inspects nuclear plants but continually analyzes the risks posed by them. If it deems a particular risk to be too high, it has the power to shut down a reactor—or, if need be, many reactors—until the problem is addressed; in 1975, for example, the commission temporarily closed all of the nation's two dozen boiling-water reactors—their design is slightly different from that of pressurized-water reactors—after finding a hairline crack at one of them. The N.R.C., however, has never defined what constitutes an unacceptable risk, and critics charge that its judgment on the matter has grown susceptible to outside influences. Just a few months ago, the N.R.C.'s inspector general issued a report chastising the commission for giving too much weight to the financial concerns of a nuclear operator. The report found that, despite compelling safety concerns, the N.R.C. had allowed the owner of the Davis-Besse plant, outside Toledo, Ohio, to delay an inspection for more than six weeks. When the commission finally performed the inspection, it discovered that acidic water had been eating through the reactor's lid—a process that, had it been allowed to continue, could well have produced a disaster.



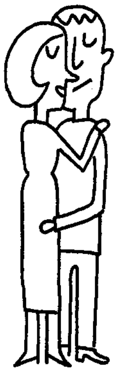
"While we finish our dessert, I thought we could all have a chat on matters fiscal."

"You have a very dangerous situation where the industry is calling the shots," Paul Leventhal, the president emeritus of the Nuclear Control Institute, a non-proliferation advocacy group, told me.

The N.R.C. began treating sabotage as a more urgent threat after the terrorist attacks of the nineteen-eighties, which included the bombing of the American Marine barracks in Beirut. In 1991, it introduced a program of drills, known as Operational Safeguards Response Evaluations, or OSREs, specifically to test plant defenses. In these drills, off-duty security guards were hired to carry out a mock attack devised by N.R.C. specialists. For obvious reasons, plant operators were alerted to the OSREs in advance; meanwhile, N.R.C. guidelines limited the attackers to three outside assailants and one insider, whose role was restricted to providing information. Between 1991 and 2000, the N.R.C. conducted the drills at the rate of roughly eight plants a year. Indian Point 2 and Indian Point 3 both passed in 1994. At nearly half of the plants tested, though, guards failed to repel the assailants before they had destroyed at least one so-called "target set." In other words, had the attack been real, the terrorists would have been in a position to cause potentially catastrophic damage.

Many plant operators were disturbed by this result, but not, it seems, for the reason one might have thought. They pressed the N.R.C. to replace the drills with more frequent security exercises of the operators' own devising. In a scathing assessment of this idea, David Orrik, a retired Navy captain who oversaw the OSREs and is still a senior official at the N.R.C., wrote that nuclear operators had demonstrated an "abject failure . . . to be capable—by themselves—of protecting against radiological sabotage. It took the threat of an OSRE to make them prepare to be 'ready,' and 47% still were not 'ready.' " In spite of this assessment, the N.R.C. was in the process of moving toward precisely the sort of program the operators were advocating when the attack on the World Trade Center occurred. At that point, the commission suspended all anti-sabotage drills, owing, as its chairman, Richard Meserve, put it, to the general "high level threat environment."

The N.R.C. is now in the process of redesigning the OSREs, presumably to better reflect the sophistication of international terrorists. The commission has said that when the redesign is completed, in the next few months, it will ask several plants, each in a different region, to volunteer to try out the new drill. Officials in New York, including Senator Hillary Clinton, strongly urged that Indian Point be one of them, and recently the N.R.C. announced that it would be.



After Slobodien had shown me around the emergency-operations facility, I continued my tour of Indian Point with Jim Steets, the communications manager for Entergy Nuclear Northeast. Steets is tall and lanky, with prematurely gray hair and an easygoing affability. He has worked at Indian Point for ten years, a period during which the plant has posed more than its share of public-relations challenges.

In May, 1992, the N.R.C., after having identified a long list of safety lapses at Indian Point 3, including one that caused a six-month failure of the backup reactor-shutdown system, fined the reactor two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars and put it on a watch list for heightened scrutiny. (At the time, Indian Point 3 was owned and operated by the New York Power Authority, and Indian Point 2 was owned and operated by Consolidated Edison.) Shortly after this fine was imposed, engineers at the reactor noticed a problem with a set of valves, and rushed to replace them before an N.R.C. inspection. In their haste, the engineers put the new valves in backward, blocking the cooling systems. The power authority fired several of its top officials and voluntarily shut down Indian Point 3 in order to conduct a safety overhaul. This overhaul was supposed to be completed in six months but ended up taking two and a half years. One N.R.C. official compared the reactor to "a plane losing altitude," while others, with a nod to "The Simpsons," dubbed it "Homer on the Hudson."

"Basically, it boiled down to poor management," Steets told me. "You could write a book on it, in all honesty."

In the late nineties, as Indian Point 3's record finally seemed to be improving, Indian Point 2's went into decline. In 1997, the N.R.C. found that electrical breakers at the reactor had not been properly inspected or maintained, and imposed a fifty-five-thousand-dollar fine on Con Ed. A year and a half later, the breaker problem still hadn't been fully resolved, an oversight that, thanks to a string of related errors, one day left the control-room alarm system without power. The N.R.C. was still figuring out the proper penalty for this incident when, in February, 2000, a tube in the reactor's steam generator ruptured, spilling twenty thousand gallons of radioactive water. The reactor received a "red finding," the N.R.C.'s lowest safety rating, and spent most of the rest of the year out of operation.

Entergy had completed its purchase of Indian Point 2 and 3 by the summer of 2001. At that point, many people at the plant, Steets told me, were hopeful that a new era was beginning. To celebrate the event, the company put up an enormous tent by the river and threw a party. "We had a great, great day out here," Steets said of the party, which took place just four days before September 11th. A month later, four of the seven control-room operating crews at Indian Point 2 failed an annual relicensing exam. Four months after that, also at Indian Point 2, a security guard was fired for pulling a gun on a colleague in an argument over a glass of orange juice.

Steets had promised to show me

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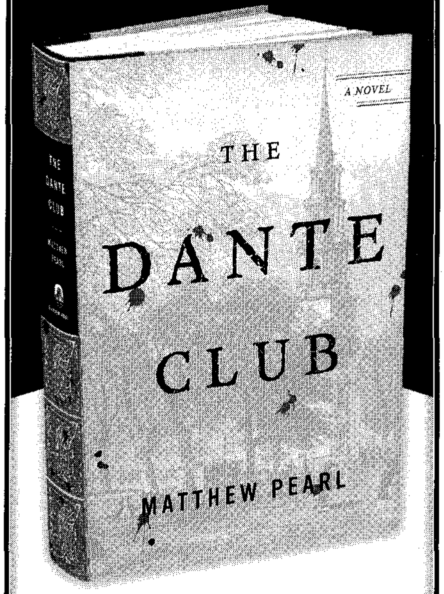

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"Miss Banks, I'm going to need a hacksaw, some green glitter, and a flounder for my four o'clock."

• •

whatever there is to see at a nuclear reactor, and so we got into his car and drove down to Indian Point 3. The area right around the reactors, called the "protected area," is much more heavily guarded than the area around the emergency-operations center, which is called the "owner-controlled area." On the drive, we passed a tall chain-link fence rimmed with concrete barriers and topped with motion sensors. A truck was idling at the gate while a guard inspected its undercarriage with a mirror on a long pole.

Before I could enter the plant, I had to get a badge from a guard carrying a semi-automatic rifle and pass through a metal detector, an explosives detector, and, finally, a radiation detector. Next, I had to go upstairs to get a dosimeter, as well as a brief, government-mandated lecture from a radiological engineer named James Barry. On the way to Barry's office, I passed signs printed with slogans like "STAR: Stop, Think, Act, Review" and "STEP: Safety Takes Employee Participation." One poster said, "IP3 Practices ALARA," which stands for "as low as reasonably achievable" and refers to radiation exposure. Another urged employees to "Save an mREM Today." (One millirem is equal to a tenth of the amount of radiation a person would be exposed to in a typical chest X-ray.) Barry told me how to respond in the event of an alarm—"the one thing we don't want you to do is run or panic"—and informed me that if I saw anything that I thought constituted a hazard to myself or anyone else I had "the right to go to the N.R.C." Then he took Steets and me over to a bank of computers that read our dosimeters, through a set of doors of the sort typically seen in prisons, and down to a huge concrete tub filled with water. At the bottom of the pool, metal racks holding spent fuel rods were just barely visible.

For more than three decades now, the federal government has been planning to construct a repository for spent uranium, with limited success. (The repository now under construction at Yucca Mountain, in the Nevada desert, will not be open until at least 2010, if it opens at all.) In the meantime, like every other reactor in the country, Indian Point has been obliged to store its spent fuel on-site. By now, Indian Point 3 has collected six hundred and twenty-four tons of the stuff, and Indian Point 2 has amassed eight hundred and eight tons. Although the fuel is of no use in generating electricity, it is still highly radioactive and produces a great deal of heat, which is why it must always be kept submerged. Two years ago, after much prodding from groups like the Union of Concerned Scientists, the N.R.C. released a study looking at the risks of a spent-fuel fire. While the commission concluded that the risk of such a fire was low—the fuel would have to be left out of water for several hours—it acknowledged that the consequences "could be comparable to those for a severe reactor accident." This finding is frequently cited by critics of Indian Point, who note that the spent fuel is housed outside the containment domes, in buildings that are comparatively vulnerable, and that it contains a host of extremely dangerous "fission products," including radioactive iodine, radioactive cesium, and strontium. Gazing down into the pool, I couldn't help wondering—even though I realized that this was not the issue—what would happen if someone fell into it. There was a lot of noise from water rushing around, and a sign that said, "Do Not Linger." Before turning in our dosimeters, we all had to have full-body radiation scans, a process that involved climbing into a closetlike structure, first frontward and then backward. I set off an alarm during mine but was assured that it didn't mean anything.

As Steets and I were leaving the plant, we passed the control room. It was filled with visitors from an international nuclear operators' association, so Steets offered to take me to see the control-room simulator instead. The simulator is an exact replica of the control room, with glass replacing one wall to allow observation of trainees. When we arrived, a large white-haired man was leading two nervous-looking younger men through a training exercise. The older man told us that the younger men were trying to keep the reactor from overheating despite eight simultaneous malfunctions. I asked him how the exercise was going to end.

"Oh, I'll be a nice guy and give them a pump back," he said, adding that before that he would probably let the temperature of the reactor core get up to eleven hundred degrees. (The tubes holding the fuel start to crack at twelve hundred degrees.) For the first time during my visit, I thought Steets looked discouraged.

After the meltdown at Three Mile Island, the N.R.C. resolved that every nuclear power plant in the country had to have an evacuation plan.

Indian Point's was put together by Westchester, Rockland, Orange, and Putnam Counties, in conjunction with the New York State Emergency Management Office. It details everything from the routes that buses should follow to the intersections where police should direct evacuees. The section of the plan devoted to Westchester County alone runs to two volumes, each several hundred pages.

Last summer, in the midst of his reëlection campaign, Governor George Pataki ordered an independent evaluation of the plan. (At the time, Riverkeeper was running a series of ads showing the plant in the center of a bull's-eye and calling on the Governor to "get the target off our backs.") The study was conducted by James Lee Witt, a former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and ran to more than five hundred pages. When it was made public, in January, the plan documented what just about everyone who lives in the region suspected: that there are simply too many people and too few roads around the plant for the area to be evacuated effectively. In an accident, only those people living in the expected path of the plume would be ordered to leave their homes; however, as the report noted, inevitably people all over the region would try to get away—a phenomenon known as a "shadow evacuation"—which could produce chaos. The report called the plan "not adequate . . . to protect the people from an unacceptable dose of radiation."

The release of the Witt report, as it has come to be known, triggered—or perhaps just provided the excuse for—a political shift in New York. The Westchester, Rockland, Orange, and Putnam county executives all declared that this year they would not sign off on the evacuation plan, as they are required to do annually. Subsequently, the state, which is supposed to send on its approval to the federal government, announced that it could not vouch for the plan, either. By now, dozens of elected officials in the region have come out openly against Indian Point, including Representative Sue Kelly and Representative Nita Lowey, of Westchester, and Representative Eliot Engel, of the Bronx, who have called for the plant to be shut down, at least temporarily.

What happens next is largely up to the N.R.C. Under its own rules, the commission would seem to have grounds to close Indian Point—the very groups that are supposed to carry out the evacuation plan have now deemed it inadequate—but that seems unlikely. (The last time the N.R.C. ordered a plant shut over its owner's objections was back in 1987, when inspectors arrived at the Peach Bottom Unit 3 reactor, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and found the control-room crew fast asleep.) Indian Point supplies ten per cent of New York's power, and while this electricity could be purchased elsewhere, it is estimated that utility bills in the state would rise by a billion dollars a year if the plant were closed. Meanwhile, whatever decision the N.R.C. reaches is bound to have ramifications far beyond New York. Because of the number of people who live around Buchanan, the risks may be quantitatively higher at Indian Point than at other reactors, but qualitatively they're really no different. In this sense, shutting down the plant would, effectively, be acknowledging that in a post-9/11 world nuclear power just isn't worth the gamble. Two weeks ago, in the middle of a heightened terrorism alert, Richard Meserve, the N.R.C.'s chairman, faulted the Witt report for giving "undue weight" to the risk of a terrorist attack.

Along with helping to distribute "Emergency Planning for Indian Point," Westchester County recently held several potassium-iodide giveaways and invited members of the public to pick up free tablets for their families. Even though I live on the other side of the county from Buchanan, more than ten miles outside the evacuation zone, I kept thinking that I really ought to go to one to get some for my kids. (Children are particularly vulnerable to thyroid damage.) A few weeks ago, I decided to visit a local drugstore instead. By that point, a lot of other parents had evidently made the same decision, because the pharmacist told me that I was getting his last three packages. They came in a thin cardboard folder marked "thyroid blocking in a radiation emergency only." ♦

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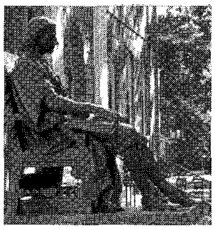

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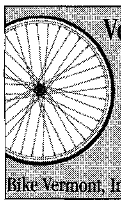

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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

OUT OF CHARACTER

Frances McDormand changes roles.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

The kidnap victim is lying dead on the kitchen floor. The murderer is out back, feeding his accomplice's body into a wood-chipper. Slowly, crunching through the snow, the police officer comes around the house. She is a woman, and she is hugely pregnant. "Police!" she yells. "Hands up! Police!" The killer doesn't hear her. The wood-chipper is making too much noise. Finally, he turns around, and she, thinking—though she is aiming a large firearm at him—that perhaps he hasn't understood, takes one hand off the gun and points to the police medallion on her cap. He gets the message, and runs. She shoots, and brings him down. The scene ends with a long shot of this dark, busy creature running through a frozen whiteness to collar her man.

The movie is "Fargo" (1996), by Joel and Ethan Coen, and the officer—Marge Gunderson, the chief of the Brainerd, Minnesota, police—is Frances McDormand. The jokes—the pregnant cop, pointing helpfully to her medallion as she faces a psychopathic killer—are typical of the Coen brothers, whose movies often tell of a nasty crime breaking through the surface of a comically normal world, and treat the crime as wittily as they treat the world. That's what has made the Coens controversial: unlike Hollywood product, their films usually have no clear moral center. But, in "Fargo," the Coens supplied such a standard, in the person of Marge. Lest we miss this fact, she is given a small speech, as she drives the miscreant to the station. He has killed five people, she says. "And for what? For a little bit of money. There's more to life than a little money, you know. Don't you know that? And here you are, and it's a beautiful day. Well, I just don't understand it." Apart from Marge, only a Sunday-school teacher could have delivered this homily. The Coens mean us to take it seriously, though, and that is probably why "Fargo," alone among their films, gained a large popular following, and Hollywood's blessing. They won an Academy Award for the screenplay. But they couldn't have made "Fargo" the hit it was without McDormand, who won the best-actress award.

That prize, as McDormand suggested in her acceptance speech, was a gift not just to her but to all women in the movie industry, for it seemed to say that an unglamorous woman, playing an unsexy role, could still be a star, by dint of good acting. This week, a new movie is being released—Lisa Cholodenko's "Laurel Canyon"—in which McDormand, at forty-five, at last plays a glamorous role, that of a rock-music producer, and she is sexy in it. She even has a nude scene, and a cute rock-star boyfriend. But this is not her usual sort of project.

When McDormand consents to see a journalist, she will generally make the appointment not at Le Cirque but at the Fairway Café, a noisy eatery above the popular New York grocery store. If she is on location, she will meet her interviewer in any old dusty corner she can find, and bring a sandwich. "I'm gonna eat lunch and talk at the same time," she once announced to a surprised interviewer in Dublin. "So what do you wanna know?" After a first session at Fairway, my conversations with her took place in a handsome penthouse, with a river view, that she maintains for business meetings and houseguests above the apartment she lives in, with her husband, Joel Coen, and their eight-year-old son, Pedro, on the Upper West Side. Still, I saw the sandwiches, twice. As for the woman eating them, she wears no makeup, and her blond hair is pulled back in a messy ponytail. She dresses in jerseys and jeans. She smokes; she cracks jokes. She is simple and direct. Her face is beautiful but severe—long and planar. It is like one of those pointy-chinned faces—the merchant's wife, the burgher's daughter—that stare out at you from old Flemish paintings. This physiognomy, together with her no-nonsense manner, has won McDormand many unseductive roles: nuns (“Crimewave,” “Madeline”), browbeaten wives (“Blood Simple,” “Mississippi Burning”), put-upon girlfriends (“Wonder Boys,” “City by the Sea”), widowed mothers (“Almost Famous”), wise doctors (“Paradise Road,” “Primal Fear”), sad lesbians (“Talk of Angels,” “The Butcher’s Wife”). She casts a movie-star spell all the same. She tells me that, since “Fargo,” strangers stop her on the street and try out their Minnesota accents on her. “You betcha!” they shout. She can’t stand this. Why don’t they leave her alone? She thinks it’s because the character of Marge was so “nice,” so approachable. I think it’s because of her face. As with those Flemish ladies, you want to meet the mind behind it.

McDormand in New York City. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.

McDormand’s father, Vernon, was a minister of the Disciples of Christ, an offshoot of Presbyterianism; her mother, Noreen, worked as a receptionist. Vernon specialized in remobilizing failing congregations, with the result that McDormand’s early youth was spent in a succession of small towns in the Bible Belt. Vernon and Noreen had no biological children, but over the years they accumulated nine foster children. “They take in strays,” McDormand says. “They also have nine cats.” They managed to adopt three of their foster children, and McDormand was the last. She came to them at the age of one and a half, in a town in Illinois. Her birth mother may have been one of Vernon’s parishioners.

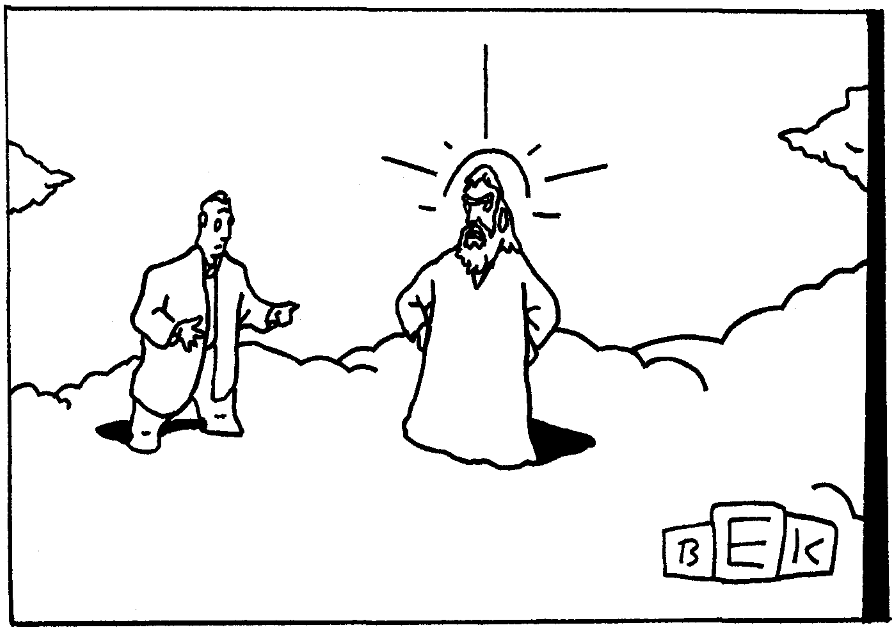
Frances didn’t like school much, apart from English. Because she was so often the new kid, she didn’t have a lot of friends. Also, she wore glasses, and she was chubby and shy. Being an outsider, she thinks, was a useful experience: it taught her to see beneath surfaces. “I never trusted good-looking boys,” she once said. “I mean, they never talked to me, but if they had I never would have trusted them.”

Then came the figure who so often appears in the story of the solitary, awkward artist-to-be: the adult who took an interest. The high-school English teacher noticed that Frances liked the selections from Shakespeare that were part of the syllabus, and she asked her if she’d like to read more Shakespeare with her after school, and memorize some speeches. Frances said yes. That teacher also directed the annual school play. “They were stupid plays,” McDormand recalls, “written specifically for high-school kids. So there was always the part for the popular girl and the popular boy, and then the friends of the popular girl and boy, and then the nerds.” The teacher gave Frances her choice of roles. “ ‘You can either play the lead girl,’ she said, ‘or you can play the girl who wears a cowgirl outfit and sings a song.’ For me, there was no choice. It had to be the cowgirl.

“During that production,” she goes on, “I realized I was sitting in a chair in the wings, listening for my cues, when everyone else was whispering and joking and seeing if they could hold people down when they were supposed to go onstage. I remember sitting there, and the popular girl came up to me and said, ‘You take this seriously, don’t you?’ And I thought, Well, yes, I guess I do. It was the only thing I had that set me apart for myself.” Also, the ethics of the theatre—community, coöperation—corresponded to her family’s ethics. During her childhood, she embraced her parents’ faith wholeheartedly: “You know, Christian youth camp, during the summer, and the epiphany you would have under the stars, about your relationship with Jesus. I also French-kissed for the first time at youth camp, and that just added to it.” The minute she left home, she forgot about the church, but her parents’ values were still a force in her mind. Today, she is on the board of an organization, the 52nd Street Project, where children from Hell’s Kitchen gather after school to put on plays. She says that she joined the project not so much out of a wish to do good but because when she moved to New York she needed a community. Her best friends, she says, are the theatre people she met there.

McDormand went to Bethany College, a small Disciples of Christ school in West Virginia. The head of the theatre department told her that she should go on to Yale Drama School, and there she spent three years preparing for a career in classical theatre. Then she did what most aspiring young actors do: she moved to New York and got a job waiting tables. She took an apartment in the Bronx with another young woman looking to break into acting, Holly Hunter. Quite soon, McDormand landed her first big job, but it was not in classical theatre. It was in a murder movie, Joel and Ethan Coen's "Blood Simple" (1984)—their first film—which told of a Southern woman being hunted down by the husband she has been cheating on. Hunter had auditioned for the lead and been offered the job, but then she ran into a scheduling conflict, so she suggested her roommate. McDormand had had no training in film acting, and she says that the reason she spends so much of "Blood Simple" standing around with her mouth open is that she was scared out of her mind. One day, having reached a pitch of terror that she thought would be useful for the scene they were filming—the last scene, a real cardiac-inducer—she was faced with a problem common in movie acting: she had to wait while the crew set up the shot. Desperate, she crawled under a table and sat there crying: "Then I heard Joel say, 'Where's Fran? Anybody know where Fran is?' Someone told him, and he got down on the floor and crawled under the table and said to me, 'O.K., the next thing we're shooting is such-and-such. Do you want to stay here until we do it?' I'm nodding and sobbing. And he goes, 'O.K., I'll be back in a minute.' He figured that was the way actors prepared." (He had never directed anyone before.) They have been together since that conference under the table. After ten years, she recalls, she looked at him and thought, "I can't believe he stayed. It was like, 'You? Ten years? Let's have a party!' " So they got married, and, since then, another ten years have passed. "He's a funny, intelligent, decent person," she says, "and he made me feel that way."

After "Blood Simple," McDormand looked for more movie jobs, but she did not have an easy time at auditions. She came of age in the seventies, and she was a feminist. Movies exploited women, she felt. At the same time, she worried about not being the kind of woman the movies wanted to exploit. "I was too little this, not enough that. I'd look through women's magazines, or at TV and films, and I'd say to myself, 'What can I be pleased with? Is there anything I can be pleased with?' So it wasn't just my beliefs—it was also my modesty and my insecurity—but I became very strict." That process began early. In college, she says, she went around in overalls. She held her body in. (She showed me a photograph of herself in a college production of "A Little Night Music": "Look, my shoulders are up around my ears.") Her oldest friend, Melissa Smith, now the conservatory director of San Francisco's A.C.T. (American Conservatory Theatre), says that when she first laid eyes on McDormand, on registration day at Yale, she said to herself, " 'That must be one of the techies.' She was heavy, maybe twenty pounds more than she is now. She wore jeans, and she had short, short hair." McDormand persisted in that look during her early casting-call years in New York. "I would send out these head shots with no makeup and my chipped tooth. The casting people would be going, 'What are we supposed to do with this?' " The presentation was not naïve. McDormand says that she went to auditions with an attitude of "Fuck you—you don't want me." Often, they wanted her anyway.



"I *am* big. It's the questions that got smaller."

But only as the cowgirl, not as the popular girl. McDormand has played a couple of floozies in her time, but in the twenty-odd feature films she has made most of her characters have been plain, virtuous women. However much she may have asked for this, she was discouraged by it. "I got put on the 'good actor' list," she says—the list that directors turn to when they've exhausted the box-office list. She became a character actor. In interviews, she spoke proudly of that calling. Character roles, she said, were generally better written than starring roles. Also, they offered longevity. Glamour girls are here today, gone tomorrow, but the flat-shoe types can still get work in their fifties.

McDormand seems to have decided that character acting was an outpost of professionalism in what was otherwise the fatuous world of filmmaking. She always felt like an outsider in Hollywood, and not just because she and Coen lived in New York. A lot of the scripts looked to her like nothing more than sketches. The dialogue was hopeless, "a sort of wash of words coming out of people's mouths between the visual spectacles." And all this was surrounded by an orgy of flummery: perks, fuss, money-wasting. She resisted. She never brought her own hair and makeup people with her to a set. Many actresses do, and insist on it, but she felt that the director should have the right, and the responsibility, to decide how the characters' faces would look, "so it's consistent with the rest of the movie, not just with the vanity of the actors." When, as has happened in recent years, she arrived on a set and found that she had been assigned a trailer that could sleep twelve—"There I am, sitting with my book and my banana, in a giant motor home"—she asked for a smaller one.

Again, there is a note of perversity mixed in with the modesty. Concerned that she was too small-breasted for certain roles, McDormand got herself a pair of prosthetic breasts—"lovely, big, C-cup, jiggly things"—which she would haul around with her, in a box, to auditions. (She wore them in "Fargo," because her character was pregnant, and on that subzero set one of them froze and exploded. "I advise women with silicone breasts who are going to Minnesota *not* to stand outside in the cold," she told *W.*) But, whatever the dark comedy of her reaction to the film world, it was based on seriousness. I asked her whether her decision not to use her own makeup artist was an act of self-abnegation. "Maybe," she answered. "But you're hoping to earn by it. You're hoping to earn artistically, and have a more interesting life." She may also have earned more character roles.

But what kept her in character acting was probably her brilliance at it. McDormand, like most film people, has made her share of dogs, such as "Chattahoochee" (1989), a political movie about mental patients' rights in Florida. I would watch that movie again, however, for the sake of the five minutes when McDormand's character—Mae Foley, a no-account small-town woman—goes to visit her husband (Gary Oldman), a Korean War veteran who, having had a breakdown and shot up the neighborhood, has landed in a state mental hospital. She has come to tell him that she wants a divorce. He is a reformer; she, by contrast, is a regular person, on the slutty side, in a dress embroidered with flowers. She tells him that she can't bear to wait for him, and throw away her youth. "I'll die," she says. She confesses that she has a new man. She blurts out that she wishes her husband had killed himself in the shootout. She repents of that instantly. She feels guilty. How can she divorce him? Still, could she please have a divorce? She wheedles; she vacillates. In the large context of the movie, she is a villain, a representative of the forces in life that make people want a little pleasure—a new man, a nice dress—more than justice. Nevertheless, she is the most poignant thing in the movie. Political filmmakers should not hire McDormand to play their villains.

As for the better sort of movie in which McDormand played character roles, often she was the thing that made it better—for example, Alan Parker's "Mississippi Burning" (1988), the story of two F.B.I. agents, Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe, investigating the disappearance of a trio of civil-rights workers in a Mississippi town in the sixties. However grave its subject, this was a pretty standard buddy movie—and also an action movie, ending in a spree of violence. In it, McDormand plays Mrs. Pell, the wife of the town's police deputy, who, in the course of a shy flirtation with Hackman, tells him where the bodies are buried. For this, her husband beats her to within an inch of her life, and that is what sets off the good-guys-kick-ass orgy at the end of the picture. It's all pretty fraudulent. Yet somehow it manages to keep standing, and McDormand, playing much the same role as in "Chattahoochee," but the good version, is a large part of the reason. Watching her hesitations—indeed, just watching her honest, ordinary body, and how she's tried to make it pretty (the pointy bra, the carefully ironed dress, the curl she's put in her hair)—and then, when Hackman honors this, watching her decide to do the right thing, you, too, would beat up half the men in town for her, forget about the civil-rights workers. It was for this role that McDormand got her first Academy Award nomination, as best supporting actress.

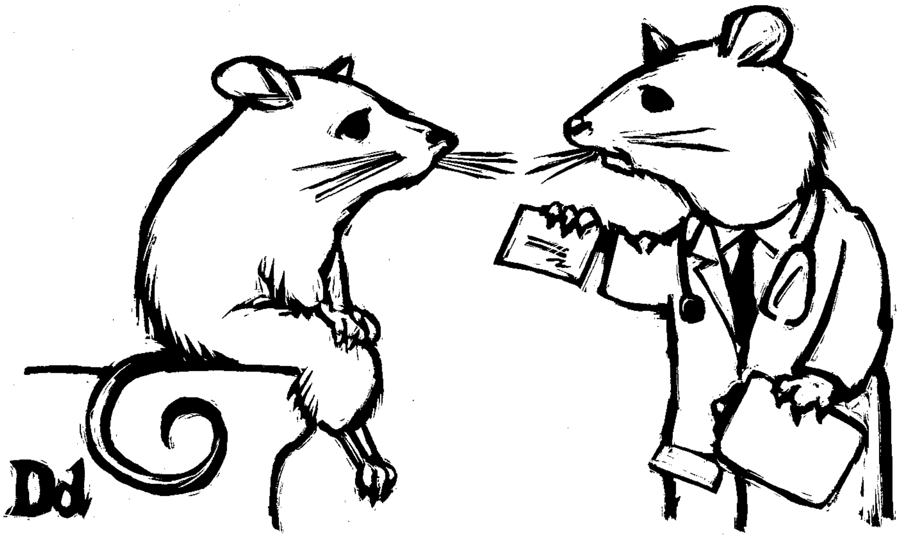
Twelve years later, for "Almost Famous" (2000)—Cameron Crowe's autobiographical tale about a fifteen-year-old journalist who is sent on tour with a rock band—she was again nominated in that category. She played the boy's mother, Elaine Miller, and the scene where she gets the band's lead singer, Russell, on the phone and tells him, basically, that if he corrupts her son she'll kill him, has gone down in film history:

> Hey, listen to me, mister. Your charm doesn't work on me. . . . This is not some apron-wearing mother you're talking to. I know all about your Valhalla of decadence, and I shouldn't have let him go. He's not ready for your world of compromised values and diminished brain cells . . . Am I speaking to you clearly? If you break his spirit, harm him in any way . . . you will meet the voice on the end of this telephone, and it will not be pretty. Do we understand each other? I didn't ask for this role, but I'll play it. Now go do your best. Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid—Goethe said that. It's not too late for you to become a person of substance, Russell. Please get my son home safely. You know, I'm glad we spoke.

Billy Crudup, as Russell, begins the conversation by condescending to her. At the end of it, he looks like a child standing over a puddle on the floor. McDormand didn't often get a speech as good as this—the Goethe quote! (Elaine is a college professor)—but, whatever she got, she made the most of it.

Some of her best assignments have been in the Coen brothers' movies, but although her name is frequently linked with theirs, she has had important roles in only four of their nine films: "Blood Simple," "Raising Arizona" (1987), "Fargo," and "The Man Who Wasn't There" (2001). She and Joel Coen decided early on that they would work independently of each other. "It was important to me that no one say I got a job because my boyfriend gave it to me," she says. She was torn, though. She wanted the lead role in the Coens' 1990 "Miller's Crossing." (It was given to Marcia Gay Harden.) She adds that that wasn't the only one. She loves being in the Coens' movies, she says, because they are so skillfully written: "Even when Joel and Ethan are bad, they're good. The lines are funny. They're economical. There's a *script.* There's meat on the bone." She also likes working with the Coens because, having collaborated with each other for so long, they collaborate with others as well. They listen to suggestions. "You feel it's your movie, too," she says.

But the Coen films weren't McDormand's only escape from Hollywood. She worked onstage, as she was trained to do. She did "All My Sons" and "Three Sisters" (once as Irina, another time as Masha). In 1988, she played Stella in "A Streetcar Named Desire," with Circle in the Square, and got a Tony nomination. She has also acted in experimental theatre—for example, the Wooster Group's 2001 "To You, the Birdie!," a free adap-



"This stuff worked pretty well on me."

tation (the cast crawled around on the floor; videos were shown) of Racine's "Phèdre." When interviewers asked her which she liked better, film or theatre, she couldn't really say. Theatre, she seemed to feel, was "work," something you could get your teeth into. Film jobs were less satisfying. Still, she wanted to be in the movies. She just wanted better roles.

In the mid-nineties, there came a change in McDormand's life, beginning with "Fargo." The role of Marge Gunderson, which the Coens wrote for her, was actually another one of her schoolmarm assignments, and, in a sense—the sense that Marge undergoes no conflict or change—it was another character role. (Most roles in Coen movies are character roles.) She remembers that when the Coens showed her the script she didn't like the part: "I felt like, Do I have to? Can't I be somebody else?" But as they were making the movie she realized how good it was. "It's our family movie," she now says. "It has our sense of humor, our sense of strangeness, our background." (The Coens, too, are Midwesterners. They were brought up in Minneapolis and, according to McDormand, felt like weirdos there, because they were Jews. They consoled themselves by watching movies many hours a day.) But "Fargo" was more than a family testament. It made McDormand a celebrity.

Then she got the Academy Award. She says she accepted that prize not so much with gratitude as with defiance. She had received awards from better organizations, she figured—juries of her peers. "I thought, Well, we did this very good film, so thank you for acknowledging it, but don't assume that you have changed my professional life." Actually, the award did change her professional life, a little. Now directors who wanted to cast her in their movies had an easier time getting financing. (She told the Coens that she'd be happy to help out if they were in a jam.) But, whereas most Oscar winners immediately try to parlay the award into splashy new film roles, the next movie she appeared in was a children's picture, "Madeline." Then she went off and did two plays.

Around this time, something else happened. She and Coen had applied to adopt a baby, and in 1995 he arrived: Pedro, six months old, from Paraguay. She became a doting mother. (She had sworn that she would never be a slave to a man, she said: "Now I'm a slave to my child. I hold my hands out and let him vomit in them.") Also, the fact of having a child finally defined her, in her mind, as a female. What maternity didn't do, aging did. When young men stop looking at you, she tells me, this is a loss, but also a gain: you stop looking at yourself through their eyes. As she approached her forties, she decided, "Oh, fuck it, already. I'll just be. I just am."

One of the theatre jobs McDormand took after getting her Oscar was "A Streetcar Named Desire," at the Gate Theatre, in Dublin. This time, she wasn't Stella; she was Blanche, and she played it earthy. (In the final scene, when the doctor comes to take her away, she rubbed her leg against his. Some reviewers disapproved.) "That role," she says, "was the punctuation mark on my turning into a woman as an actor. From then on, it's been about my body, my age, my information." As I understand it, the change she is describing is not the old scenario of motherhood conferring femininity on a shy girl, nor is it exactly a case of second-stage feminism, though it sounds a little like both. When she describes the factors involved in her decision to use sexuality in acting, the one that seems to make her voice rise is acting itself, her gathering sense that she was very good at it, and could now dare to put into it whatever she had. Simply, she felt a new sense of power.

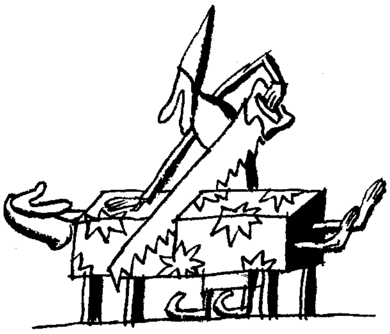
There remained the problem of landing a movie role in which she could use that power. The Coens cast her as a tough broad in their most recent film, "The Man Who Wasn't There," but that character (the hero's adulterous wife) was very stylized: an homage to the bad girls of film noir. Almost more sexy, McDormand thinks—or more forceful, more "out there"—was the role of the mother in "Almost Famous." She remembers, however, that when, in the movie, her son goes on the road with the band, all she could think was that *she* wanted to go on the road with the band. She was tired of playing mothers and sisters. "Give me a good psycho-killer, a good prostitute," she said to an interviewer at the time.

In the past few years, a number of young female director-screenwriters—Nicole Holofcener, Rebecca Miller, Karyn Kusama, Lisa Cholodenko—have begun turning out a new kind of "women's picture." Most women's pictures, McDormand says, "are as boring and as formulaic as men's pictures. In place of a car chase or a battle scene, what you get is an extreme closeup of a woman breaking down. I cry, too, maybe three times a week, but it's not in closeup. It's in wide shot. It's in the context of a very large and very mean world." In Cholodenko's "High Art" and

Holofcener's "Lovely & Amazing" and Miller's "Personal Velocity," women cry, but for complex, possibly even ironic reasons—not because their daughter is dying of cancer—and their sorrows don't always find a resolution. McDormand was interested in these young filmmakers. "I knew they knew actresses their own age," she says, "but they were going to need older women, too. They were going to need me."

"Laurel Canyon," Lisa Cholodenko's second movie, is the story of Jane, a successful rock-music producer in her mid-forties. Jane had a child while she was quite young, and her son, Sam—a doctor now—is as conventional as she is freewheeling. In the first scene, he and his fiancée, Alex, are leaving Harvard for Los Angeles, where he will take up a residency at a local hospital and Alex will finish her dissertation on genomics. Jane has told them that they can live in her house in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles's arty neighborhood; she'll be elsewhere. But when they arrive she's still there, with her rock-singer boyfriend—indeed, with his band. Many complications ensue. Basically, Alex falls in love with Jane, or with her world—to the intense discomfort of Sam, who thinks his mother and her cohort are a bunch of shiftless dope-hounds. He knows that Jane is charismatic, though, and, as played by McDormand, she certainly is.

The movie stresses Jane's age—we're repeatedly reminded that her boyfriend is about the same age as her son—and yet McDormand is treated with all the dazzle that would be lavished on a starlet. Her clothes hang on her wonderfully. She is beautifully lit, almost haloed. In the nude scene, shot in a swimming pool, her hair is matted at her neck, but amid the rising vapors of the water and the whiskey sours, and with her pink body shining up through the ripples ("I wanted so much to do a nude scene," she says), we seem to be looking at the birth of Venus. The sexuality is not pushy; it is free, relaxed. As events develop, it is also a source of difficulty. In another scene, Jane lies back on a couch, and undoes her boyfriend's belt. The boyfriend (Alessandro Nivola) tells her he's in this relationship for the long haul. She brushes this off. She's playing the wise older woman: easy come, easy go. And then a look of worry passes across her face. Not so easy go. She's in love. It's a wide shot. The movie has its problems. (For example, preachiness, of the counterculture variety.) Still, it is a gift to McDormand. She finally got to go on the road with the band. And her performance, as exuberant when she is stuffing melon into the juicer (she offers some to Alex—"it's great for the colon") as when she is rocking with the band, is a gift to us.



Soon after finishing "Laurel Canyon," McDormand accepted a role in the play "Far Away," a dystopic drama about ethnic cleansing—written by Caryl Churchill and directed by Stephen Daldry—which opened at New York Theatre Workshop last year. She played an old aunt, explaining to a child why people were being killed in the shed in the back yard. McDormand says that, at the beginning, she did not want this assignment: "Frump again! The frumpy clothes, the ugly wigs, the old-age makeup!" But she liked the play, and wanted to help put it onstage.

Looking back on her career, she is a little pained. She feels that much of it was cramped, misguided. But she comforts herself. She tells me to go see a movie, "Rivers and Tides," about the English artist Andy Goldsworthy, who makes sculptures, in nature, out of nature—webs of twigs, ribbons of leaves, cones of stones—that, like nature, begin dying as soon as they are born. Going out before dawn on a cold morning, he'll put together a construction of thorns—"gluing them together with his spit," McDormand says. "His frozen spit." Then, as the sun rises and the earth warms up, the sculpture falls apart. He accepts that. In the same way, McDormand tells me, she accepts the work she has done: "Goldsworthy says, 'I don't know this rock yet.' And so he keeps working on that rock. That's the way I feel about the past twenty years." ♦

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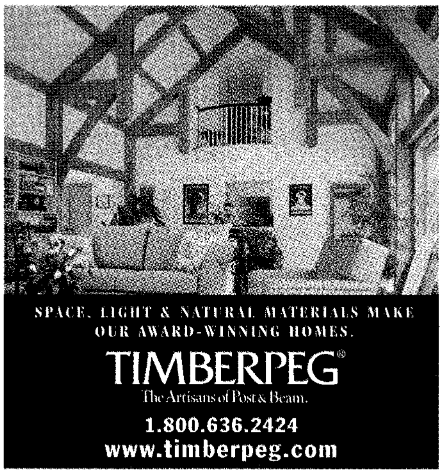

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*19.7" screen size measured diagonally.

SHOUTS & MURMURS

URGENT BULLETIN FROM THE DUCTSTAR GROUP

BY BRUCE McCALL

Our government warns that something very bad could happen at any moment. That's where the DuctStar Group comes in. As the makers of DuctStik, DuctGrip, Doctor Duct, Royal Duct Supreme, and other adhesive tapes, we've prepared some possible disaster scenarios and tips on how DuctStar duct tapes can help. Why not duct-tape* this page to the fridge?

SCENARIO 1: Household member dismisses Homeland Security alerts as "panic-mongering," sowing calm.

SOLUTION: Grab household member and seal his or her mouth with DuctGrip duct tape.

SCENARIO 2: Neighbor claims that she smells something funny in the air.

SOLUTION: Buy an industrial-sized reel of Doctor Duct extra-heavy-duty duct tape and wrap it tightly around your neighbor's house, with your neighbor in it. The house is probably contaminated, and your neighbor, too.

SCENARIO 3: Authorities suggest that you plan an evacuation route.

SOLUTION: Using DuctStik ribbon-cut duct tape of six-inch width (A-10A), lay out a path on the ground from your home to a distant safe spot—a cabin in the Adirondacks, a cave in Arkansas, etc. DuctStik Rainbow Glo-Dark duct tape (BB-15B) may be hard to find, but it could be a lifesaver if you plan to flee by night.

SCENARIO 4: Experts warn that dangerous bacteria could be dumped in community water supplies.

SOLUTION: Before turning in at night, double-seal all household drains, faucets, garden-hose nozzles, and other water outlets with Doctor Duct Rx Surgery Formula duct tape. If you have an aquarium in your home, study the behavior of your fish for early signs of nerve damage. Or, just to be safe, seal the aquarium with DuctSeal Marine and Fishing Net Tape. Before going swimming in streams, rivers, and lakes, completely wrap yourself in AquaDuct Body Tape (it's perspiration-resistant).

SCENARIO 5: Constant emergencies lower citizen morale.

SOLUTION: Buy several different widths and colors of Lady DuctStar decorator-approved non-asbestos tape and have a "duct-tape party" in your home. Apply Lady DuctStar to the walls and floors in vertical and horizontal stripes and in diamonds or other patterns. It's fabulous decorating fun—and you'll have a duct-tape supply ready to strip off the walls in a jiff if the order comes to seal all doors, windows, and chimneys.

SCENARIO 6: Mass evacuation triggers mass confusion.

SOLUTION: Don't forget your pets in the hubbub! Best bet: use No. 16 Duct-Fur Sta-Pet—it's irritant-free—to tape them to the roof of your car.

SCENARIO 7: Homeland Security warns that there could be terrorists lurking among us.

SOLUTION: Be on the lookout for anyone without a roll of duct tape in his or her possession and report such people to the authorities. Only a terrorist doesn't need DuctStar brand duct tape!

SCENARIO 8: Duct-tape supplies in your community are rumored to be exhausted.

SOLUTION: Buy shares in a reputable duct-tape manufacturer such as DuctStar. As a part owner of the firm, you'll be eligible for virtually unlimited amounts of DuctStar products—at cost! ♦

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*Do not accept duck tape, deck tape, or dock tape as substitutes for genuine DuctStar duct-tape products. Masking, draftsman's, cellulose, video-, and audiotape are not interchangeable with DuctStar tapes. DuctGrip, DuctStik, and Doctor Duct tapes should not be used to repair dams or contain avalanches. DuctStar tapes are not warranted to solve all binding, sealing, and masking problems connected with the possible end of the world.

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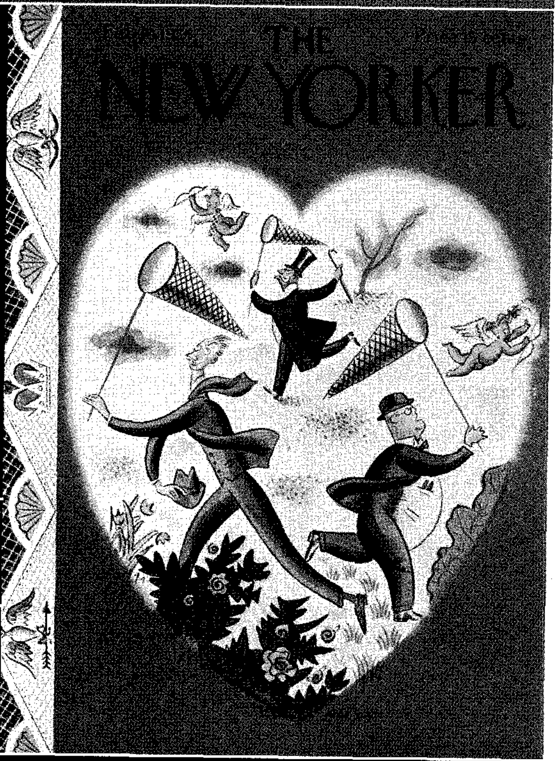
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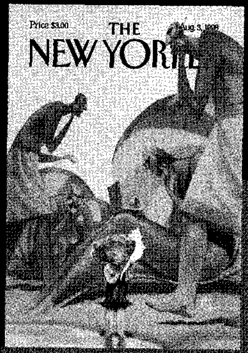
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PROFILES

THE OPTIMIST

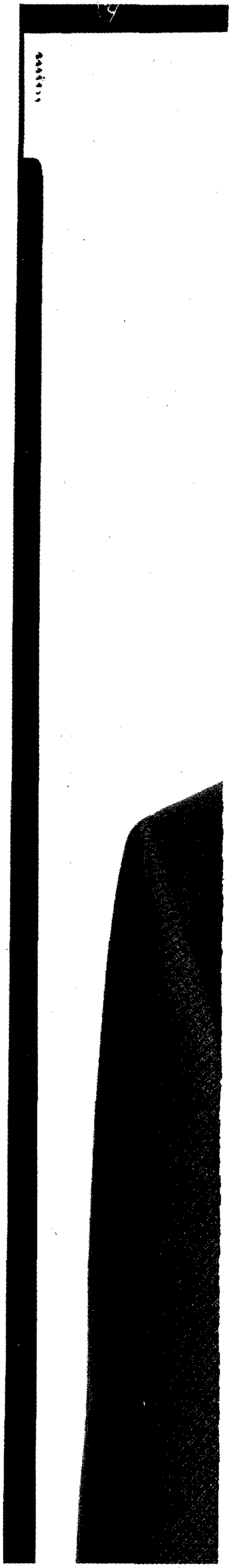
Kofi Annan's U.N. has never been more important and more imperilled.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

From a distance, Kofi Annan's gray hair and goatee cast a hazy nimbus around his face, and his features appear as if in soft focus. At closer range, it is an easy face to look at, in no way extraordinary, and this is its advantage: it does not appear to be hiding anything, and at the same time it gives nothing away. The rest of him is of a piece, a model of equanimity. (Recently, when I asked about Annan's plans, one of his aides said, "We're trying to read his body language. That means we have no idea.") Annan is a slight man—five feet nine, and trim—with perfect posture and an unflappable air of amiable gravity. His impeccable tailoring, stately bearing, and elegant, expressive hands suggest a personal fastidiousness, even preciousness. He is, in fact, an aristocrat—in Ghana, where he was born and raised, his father was a traditional chief of the Fante people; through his mother, he is heir to the paramount chieftancy of the Akwamu. His wife, Nane Annan, is also of proud pedigree, a niece of Raoul Wallenberg, the martyred Swedish rescuer of Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust. Like many complex people, Annan likes to describe himself as a simple man. He says he prefers to live life modestly and enjoys nothing so much as a hike in the country. He loves to dance, and he does so with the sort of undemonstrative panache that draws one's attention as if by seeking to deflect it—through finesse and understatement, expressing warmth while manifesting cool. He is at once intensely present and personable and curiously detached. Annan was born a twin, and when I asked him about that, he said, "Yes, I had a twin, but she died about eight years ago. We were close, yah." A colleague who has worked with Annan for years expressed astonishment at this: "I've never heard him say he was close to anyone before."

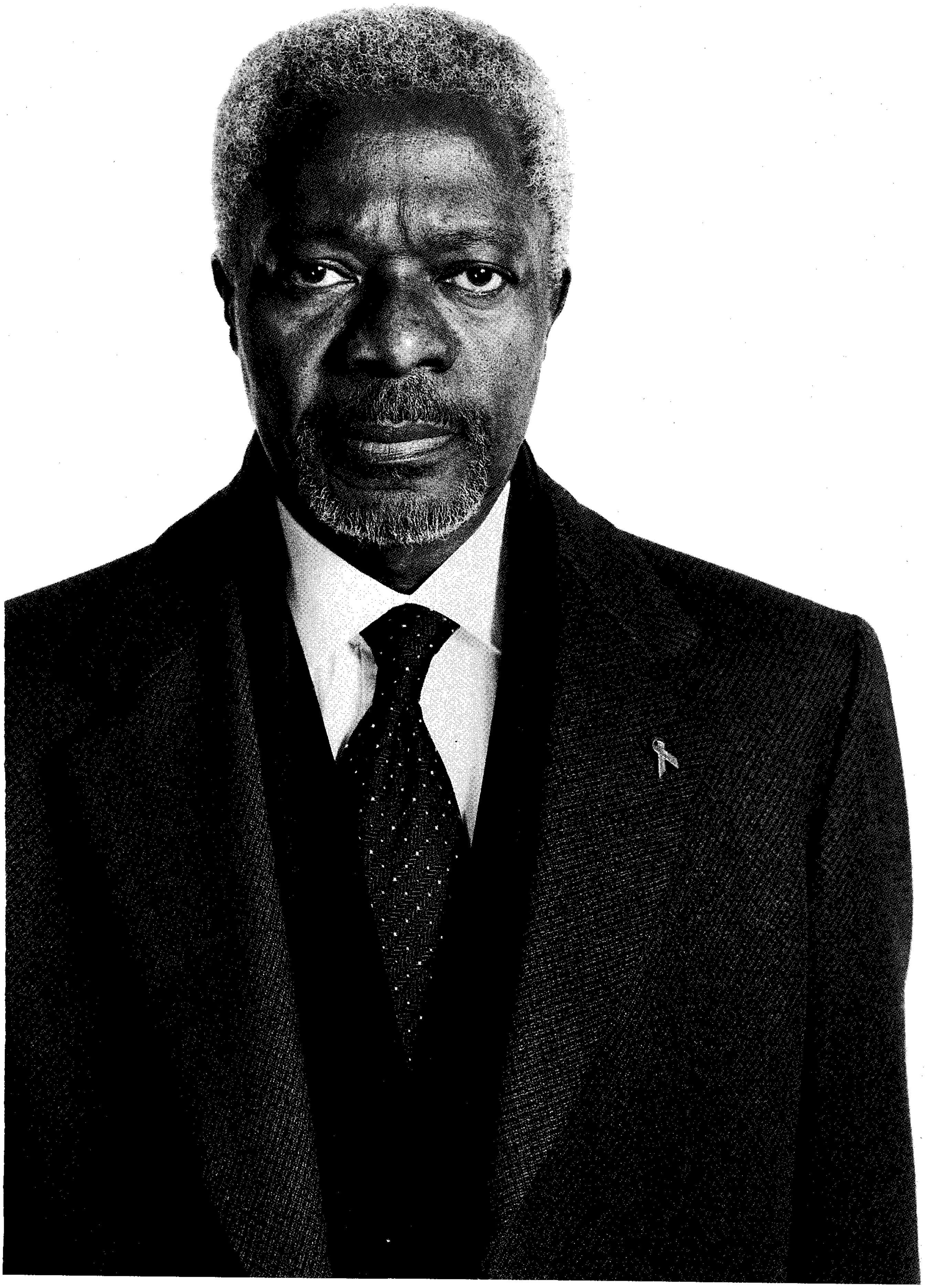
Annan has spent four decades working in the U.N. bureaucracy, and before he became Secretary-General, six years ago—the first black African, and the first career U.N. man to hold the office—he and his wife lived in a three-bedroom apartment on Roosevelt Island, in the East River; now they look out on the river from their official residence, a grand brownstone on Sutton Place, the former mansion of J. P. Morgan's daughter, and they have become fixtures of New York society. Annan has appeared as a special guest on "Sesame Street," seeking to resolve a conflict between shag-carpeted puppets, and a double-page photo of the Annans embracing ran in the "Couples Issue" of *Vogue* in February. "There is a little bit of an element of a royal couple around them," Mark Malloch Brown, an Englishman who runs the U.N. Development Program and has counted the Annans as friends for nearly twenty years, told me. Malloch Brown used to work as an international political consultant, advising heads of state. "My guys slogged through the trenches, and by the time they got to be national leaders they had put their reputations on the line, they had lived through campaigns, they were battle-hardened veterans. But royals sort of get there effortlessly, by accident of birth. Although Kofi and Nane came up through the ranks, they have a more gracious, divine-right-of-kings feel about them than the other Secretary-Generals I've known."

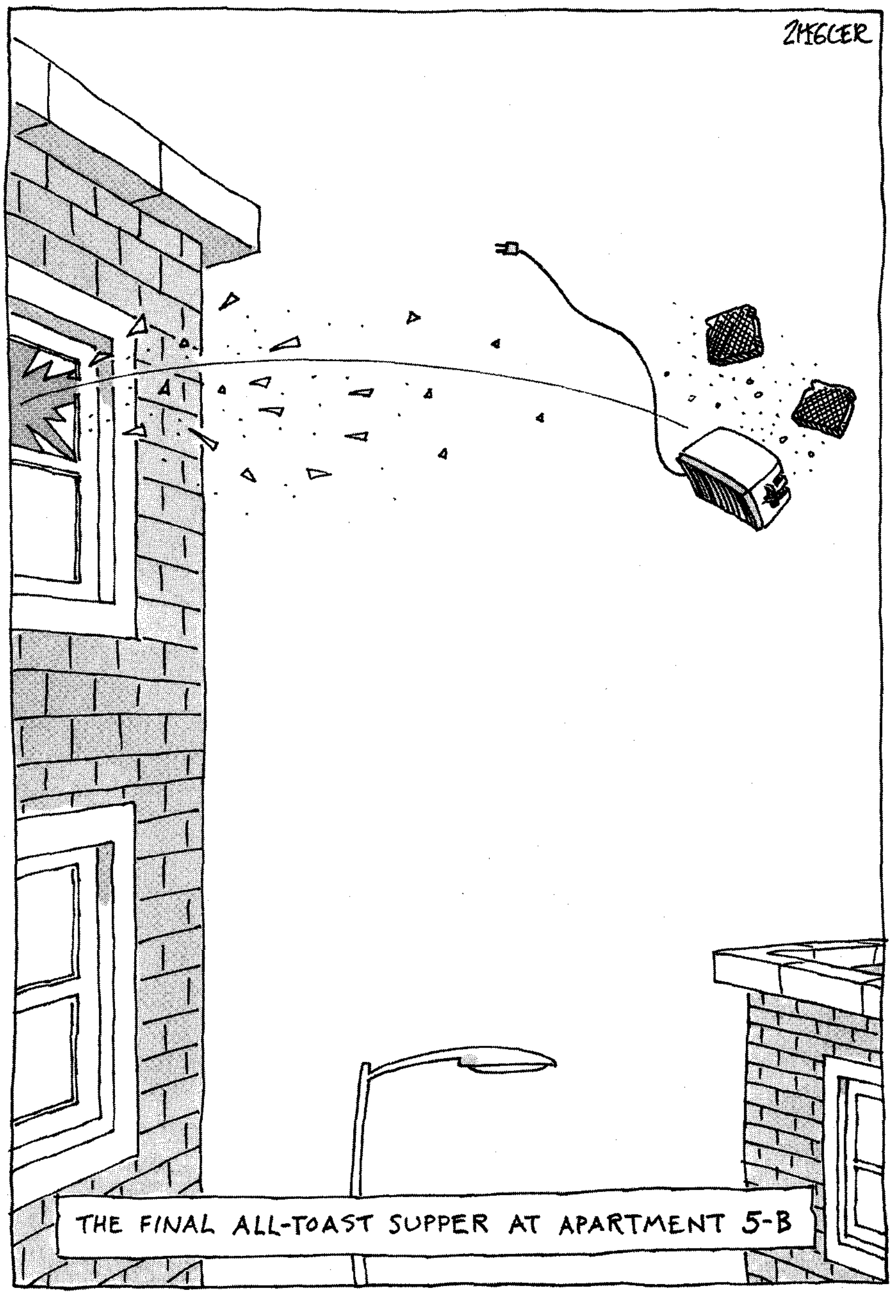
In the mid-nineties, Annan served as head of the U.N. Peacekeeping depart-



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

"Sometimes when I wake up in the morning I don't know where else a major crisis is going to come from, where it's going to break," Annan says.





THE FINAL ALL-TOAST SUPPER AT APARTMENT 5-B

ment for nearly four years, during which he oversaw the grim withdrawal of the U.N.'s force from Somalia, and the catastrophic failures of its missions in Bosnia and Rwanda. Nonetheless, he professes continued astonishment at the existence of evil. Since his elevation to Secretary-General in 1997, he has been charged by the U.N. Charter with looking after "the maintenance of international peace and security," and while that goal remains elusive, he exudes an uncanny sense of being at peace in himself. After all, as he never tires of pointing out, he has no practical political power. He controls no territory; he commands no troops; he cannot make or enforce laws; he cannot levy taxes; he exercises no administrative authority outside the U.N. bureaucracy, and he hasn't even got a vote in its General Assembly or on the Security Council. The Secretary-General, he says, is "invested only with the power that a united Security Council may wish to bestow, and the moral authority entrusted to him by the Charter"—or, put more plainly, he has nothing but his voice.

Annan's voice is a low, husky hush, like an amplified whisper, and there is an uncanny metronomic evenness to his speech. He sounds ancient, and yet the voice is full of vigor, a monotone without tedium, inflected only by the equatorial mid-Atlantic lilt of his accent—as much West Indian, to an American ear, as West African—which lends it a muted musical cadence. The effect is disconcertingly soothing. Annan can make the vaguest, most innocuous statements sound substantial and profound, and he can deliver his toughest, most challenging arguments without apparent argumentativeness. When he speaks, one-on-one or from a dais studded with microphones, he clearly feels himself to be speaking to the world, but he creates the impression of a man listening to himself, confirming that he agrees with himself as he goes, and allowing one to eavesdrop. In the complete absence of any discernible attitude in the quietly rumbling deadpan of his oratory, one is left with nothing to respond to but his words.

The overriding theme of Annan's frequent public speeches is that the troubles of the world in our time—war, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, AIDS, refugees and economic migration, extreme poverty, environmental degradation, and all other manner of woe and mischief that humanity is heir to—are more than ever "problems without borders," and must be dealt with as such, internationally, lest we reap a whirlwind of Hobbesian mayhem. To anyone with a pessimistic view of history, the notion that our salvation depends on everyone's coming together for the common good may sound like a forecast of doom. But Annan, who counts himself as a pragmatist, believes in the possibility of world order. Reflecting on the terrorist attacks of September, 2001, he heard a wakeup call for his cause. "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have entered the third millennium through a gate of fire," he said in Oslo, on accepting the Nobel Peace Prize—awarded jointly to Annan and to the U.N.—in December of that year. "If, today, after the horror of 11 September, we see better, and we see further, we will realize that humanity is indivisible." To illustrate his point, Annan evoked an image from chaos theory: "Scientists tell us that the world of nature is so small and interdependent that a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon rainforest can generate a violent storm on the other side of the earth. This principle is known as the Butterfly Effect. Today, we realize, perhaps more than ever, that the world of human activity also has its own Butterfly Effect—for better or for worse."

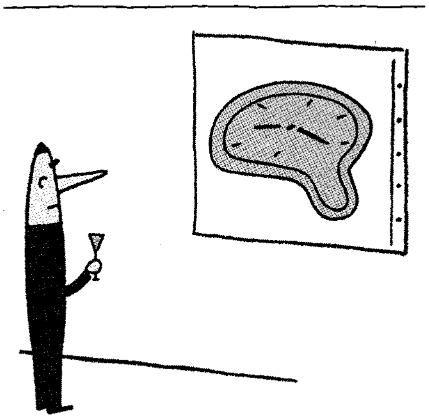
A year later, when I visited him in his office at the northeast corner of the thirty-eighth floor—the top floor, of course—of U.N. headquarters, Annan allowed that of late the human storms have been for the worse. His office is a spacious room, wood-panelled, with a large, surprisingly clean desk (no computer). One wall of the room is almost entirely glass, giving way to a vast and mesmerizing panorama across the East River of the roofscape and highway overpasses of Queens. It is a comfortable aerie; a pleasantly defiant memory of Cuban cigar smoke hung in the air. "The world is really a big mess," Annan said as we settled into his sitting area. "Wherever you turn you have problems." Iraq was obviously the most pressing issue for the U.N., but Annan seemed as concerned by the ravages of poverty, disease, ignorance, and misrule. "We have the global economic downturn, and of course you have the terrorist threats and the terrorist networks, which are spread very far," he said. "Even without these things, I always maintain that we have a serious crisis of governance. To govern in this atmosphere and take optimal and rational decisions, trying to deal with the hot issues while containing the others, is a really difficult thing. Sometimes when I wake up in the morning I don't know where else a major crisis is going to come from, where it's going to break."

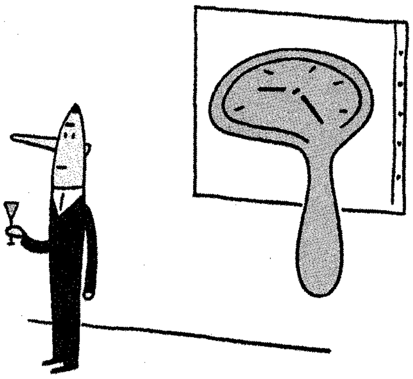
Annan didn't sound alarmed; his voice was as mellifluous as ever. He is, above all, an optimist, and he spoke with something of a weatherman's confidence that even the most devastating tempests will pass. He is a master of talking politics without politicizing, naming names, or apportioning blame. This is partly standard diplomatic discretion and partly a taste for subtlety that is peculiarly suited to the ambiguities of his office. The U.N. is composed of a hundred and ninety-one sovereign governments. These member states, as they're called, are Annan's employers, and, as his double-barrelled title indicates, his job is to serve them as the U.N.'s secretary, its chief administrative officer, and also as its general, its chief political operative. Together the member states form the General Assembly, which convenes in full each fall. The Assembly rides herd over the U.N.'s administrative functions, sets its internal agenda, and can also pass resolutions, which may have political influence but have no standing as law and no power of enforcement. For that, there is the Security Council, the U.N.'s political organ, which has only fifteen seats, ten allotted by an arcane political arithmetic to member states elected for two-year stints, and the remainder occupied since 1945 by five permanent members, known in-house as the P-5—China, England, France, Russia, and the United States—who alone enjoy the supreme power of the veto, and thereby dominate the Council's debates and decisions.

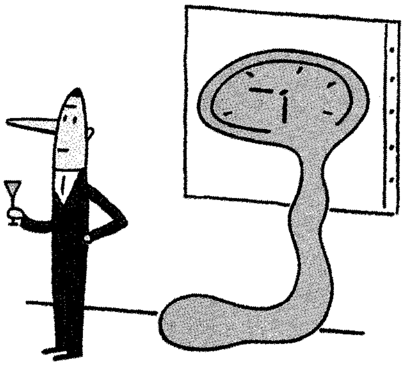
The Security Council's resolutions have the authority of international law, and the Secretary-General is supposed to see that they are carried out. In addition, Annan is endowed with an independent political capacity, described vaguely in the Charter by a single sentence: "The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security." In other words, he is expected to tell his bosses what he thinks they should be thinking about. But, at the same time, the Charter states that he must "not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization." So Annan must be independent—not neutral, exactly, for he must exercise judgment—serving all states while being beholden to none, interpreting the rules of the game as the world's hybrid coach and referee.

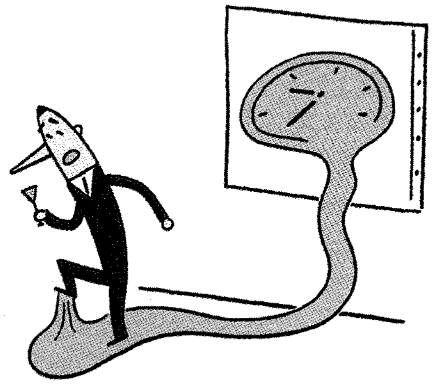
Such unaligned evenhandedness is made unusually tricky because of the Council's limited membership and the concentration of its political powers in just a few hands. The U.N. is hardly the universally representative body of "international community" it purports to

"I'm going to need a hug, Maurice—it's from the A.A.R.P."









be. And if the P-5 rule the roost, America is the cock of the walk. In that, at least, the U.N. is truly a microcosm of global reality, and America's predominance has been the defining feature of Annan's tenure. "The rest of the world is trying to live in the shadow of the U.S., and they come to him and hope he will explain the U.S. to them, and hope he will explain them to the U.S.," Nader Mousavizadeh, a close aide to Annan, told me. When Annan took office, with the blessings of the Clinton Administration after it unceremoniously killed the reëlection bid of his Egyptian predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, there was much grumbling in the international press that he was Washington's poodle. That is no longer the view. "He appears to be everybody's Secretary-General," Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Ambassador to the U.N., said, although he was quick to add that it would be folly for Annan to ignore America's clout.

Annan's most important diplomatic mission as Secretary-General may well have been his first, which took him to Capitol Hill in 1997, where—in exchange for a promise, since fulfilled, to streamline and consolidate the U.N. bureaucracy—he persuaded Jesse Helms to release nearly a billion dollars of America's U.N. dues that had been held back for years. "The United Nations needs the United States to achieve our goals, and I believe the United States needs the United Nations no less," Annan has said. But, even when it pays its way, Washington does not always feel the need of the U.N. so keenly. With its distrust of what Thomas Jefferson—in his first inaugural address, two hundred years ago—called "entangling alliances," the United States has always taken a selective approach to international coöperation, which puts Annan in a delicate position. "We need to be careful, and the U.S. also needs to be careful," he told me, adding, "One may not be happy with the U.N. today, or the Council today, because one is not getting one's way. But tomorrow one is going to need that organization." Yet, there was little the U.N. could do but cringe when the Bush Administration repudiated the Kyoto agreements on global environmental standards and withdrew from the newly established International Criminal Court. After September 11, 2001, the United States turned to the Security Council for support for the war in Afghanistan, but Washington's selective approach to multilateralism created resentment abroad, even among long-standing allies.

Throughout the summer of 2002, Bush ratcheted up the threat of invading Iraq and getting rid of Saddam Hussein, alone or in a lonely coalition with England. He began challenging the American preference for deterrence and containment of foreign threats in favor of preëmptive action, and he argued that, since there were already more than a dozen valid Security Council resolutions on the books demanding that Saddam Hussein disarm, no further U.N. authority was needed. Such American unilateralism was hardly a recent, Republican innovation. "Three times Clinton did what many of the Democrats are now saying Bush can't do," Richard Holbrooke, who served as U.N. Ambassador during Clinton's second term, reminded me recently. "He did it in Bosnia in '95, in Iraq with Desert Fox in December of '98, and in Kosovo in '99. In the two Balkan cases he had no Security Council authority," Holbrooke said, adding: "In the case of Iraq, December '98, the U.N. was starting its meetings when they got the word that the bombing had begun, and Clinton simply said, 'Well, I'm bombing under U.N. authority because Iraq's in material breach.' " Since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, American and British warplanes have been bombing military targets in and around the "no-fly" zones in Iraq, and although these actions have no U.N. mandate, they have been tolerated by the Security Council.

But now Bush was talking about conquering Iraq, and virtually every other country in the Assembly opposed the idea. Even within the Administration, and among prominent voices in the Republican foreign-policy establishment, there was increasingly open disapproval of moving against Iraq unilaterally, or at all, and opinion polls showed that the American people, too, wanted the U.N. involved. By Labor Day, Bush had taken to saying that war could wait, but this was hardly a great concession, considering that it would

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

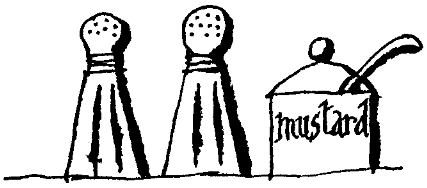
take nearly six months to mobilize and position the forces necessary for the proposed attack.

On September 12th, Bush addressed the opening session of the General Assembly, and nobody in the hall that day knew what he would say. By convention, Annan spoke first. In recognition of the drama of the occasion, he had given the White House copies of the text of his speech the day before, and, in a break with protocol, advance copies were also made available to the press to insure that Annan's remarks were not completely eclipsed by those of Bush. "Choosing to follow or reject the multilateral path must not be a simple matter of political convenience," Annan said, and he invoked the example of the U.N.-mandated Gulf War as a reminder that "when states decide to use force to deal with broader threats to international peace and security, there is no substitute for the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations." He made it clear that multilateralism does not simply mean doing America's bidding: "The existence of an effective international security system depends on the Council's authority, and therefore on the Council having the political will to act even in the most difficult cases, when agreement seems elusive at the outset." He used the word "multilateral" nine times in the course of his speech, before mentioning Iraq by name, and when he did he steered a delicate middle course between pleasing the Assembly's antiwar constituency by describing the resumption of weapons inspections as "the indispensable first step" to resolving the crisis, and acknowledging Washington's underlying view of where the blame for the standoff lay: "I urge Iraq to comply with its obligations for the sake of its own people and for the sake of world order. If Iraq's defiance continues, the Security Council must face its responsibilities."

Annan's speech was a hit, but Bush stole its thunder. "We created the United Nations Security Council, so that—unlike the League of Nations—our deliberations would be more than talk, and our resolutions would be more than wishes," he said, and that swift mention of the League—the U.N.'s disgraced predecessor, which dissolved into oblivion on the eve of the Second World War, after failing to respond to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia—cut to the quick. The trouble with Iraq, Bush said, was not an American beef but a clash between Saddam's regime and the U.N. He recited the demands of past resolutions on Iraq, and quoted from the U.N.'s own reports to show how they had been systematically violated.

"All the world now faces a test, and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment," Bush said. "Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?" It was Saddam who was subverting the organization through unilateral action, he explained, and he proposed that the Security Council pass a new resolution, demanding immediate and unconditional compliance with all previous resolutions, and making the alternative clear: that "a regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power." The choice, Bush said, was between fear and progress, and he ended as he had begun, in a spirit that was equal parts challenge and invitation: "We must stand up for our security, and for the permanent rights and the hopes of mankind. By heritage and by choice, the United States of America will make that stand. Delegates to the United Nations, you have the power to make that stand as well."

The Assembly responded with tremendous relief that Bush hadn't simply written them off. Shashi Tharoor, a longtime deputy to Annan who is now Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, said that the President had "come out very much smelling like roses." Annan's take was, characteristically, more reserved. He agreed that the current Iraq crisis represented "a crucial moment for the organization," but he did not care for the suggestion that the U.N. might go the way of the League of Nations. "I think that was overstating the case," he said to me. What most impressed him about Bush's performance was the response in the General Assembly: "Every speaker who got up and spoke after the President said Iraq has to coöperate, Iraq must disarm."



The United States had never threatened regime change so convincingly, but Annan had heard tough talk about Iraq before. In February of 1998, during a similar crisis, he had taken it upon himself to go to Baghdad to negotiate with Saddam directly. U.N. weapons inspectors had been in Iraq for nearly seven years then, a period marked by significant early successes in finding and dismantling Iraq's nuclear, biological, and chemical arsenal, and at least an equal degree of frustration at the hands of deceitful and obstructionist Iraqi officials. But they had reached a deadlock with the regime. At issue were eight sprawling complexes to which the Iraqis forbade access, declaring that they were "presidential sites." According to the resolutions that mandated the inspections, this was a meaningless objection: inspectors were to go wherever they chose, whenever they felt like it. The United States responded to the impasse by threatening to bomb Saddam into submission, a prospect France and Russia angrily opposed. When Annan got word from Yasir Arafat that Saddam might be willing to negotiate, he let it be known that he was on his way. Madeleine Albright, who was then Secretary of State, urged him to put off the trip, and when he said he was going anyway President Jacques Chirac of France loaned him his jet. Chirac asked the Secretary-General to extend his personal greetings to Saddam and to express his great esteem for Iraq.

On his arrival in Baghdad, Annan spoke of his mission as a "sacred duty." But diplomacy can be foul work. He and Saddam shook hands. They smoked cigars together; they drank orange juice. Annan told Saddam he was a leader of scope and "courage," a "builder," who had brought Iraq into the modern age, and reconstructed it after the Gulf War, and who now had the opportunity to save it from being pounded by American bombs, if only they could come to terms. Saddam returned the compliments, and, with their rapport thus established, the two men cut a deal: Iraq would not be bombed, and the weapons inspectors could get on with their task, albeit more gingerly.

U.N. press officers played the meeting as a triumph of peacemaking, and Annan himself emerged from the encounter in an uncharacteristically boastful, *veni, vidi, vici* mood. Before he left Baghdad, Annan told a reporter that Iraq had been “demonized” by the international community and that the world was as isolated from Iraq as Iraq was from the world. On his return to Paris he received a hero’s welcome at a state dinner, where Chirac raised his glass and praised him for averting the next world war. Back in New York, much of the staff at the United Nations poured out of the building to hail him, although the weapons inspectors stayed at their desks. (They thought they’d been sold out.) Annan told the adoring throng that he had not been alone but surrounded by the world’s prayers. And he spoke the line that has dogged him ever since, saying of Saddam Hussein, “He’s a man I can do business with.”

In fact, Saddam had given Annan the business. The Security Council quickly approved the Baghdad agreement, and, while Clinton officials grumbled publicly about the details, there was considerable relief in Washington at not having to go through with the bombing. In short order, however, Iraq was reneging on its promises and throwing up hurdles to inspections. Six months after Annan’s trip, in August, the Iraqis announced that they would no longer coöperate with inspections. At the end of October, 1998, Baghdad ordered the inspectors to stop all activities. Before long, Washington told the inspectors to pack up and leave in a hurry. A few days later, a fleet of American and British heavy bombers were in the air, less than an hour from their Iraqi targets, when Annan—who had been trying once again to get the Iraqis to reverse their defiant position—received a letter from Saddam agreeing to let the inspections resume. At very nearly the last minute, the White House called the planes back, and for a few weeks the inspectors did resume their dance with the Iraqis, which in early December once again ground to a halt. On the sixteenth of that month, the bombing began. “This is a sad day for the United Nations and the world,” Annan said, and he added, “It is also a very sad day for me, personally.” The air raids—dubbed Operation Desert Fox—lasted four days. A year later, the Security Council adopted a resolution imposing a new inspections regime, and periodically in 2000 and 2001 Annan sought to revive talks with Iraq to gain the inspectors access. But Iraq stonewalled, and last July he let the dialogue collapse.

Annan does not regret going to Baghdad in 1998. After all, the alternative was bombing, and, as he said to me, “After the bombing, then what?” Four years later, he had his answer. “Now we’re all sitting back and saying, What has happened in the meantime? What did Saddam do during the four years that the inspectors were not there? This implies that the inspectors had an impact and were able to disrupt or at least prevent the Iraqis from doing what they would have liked to do.” But it wasn’t the bombing that stopped the inspections; Saddam did, and he emerged from the encounter according to his definition of victory: “insuring your enemy does not get what he wants.” The bombs were punishment after the fact, part of a new strategy, known by Madeleine Albright’s phrase, “to keep Saddam Hussein in his box.” Thereafter, a former U.N. Iraq hand told me, “Clinton policy was to leave it for the next lot.”

Now the next lot had come to the U.N., and nobody was asking Annan to go back to Baghdad, nor did he volunteer. In 1998, he had taken the worst drubbing of his career at the hands of American critics in Congress and the press, who charged him with everything from hapless naïveté to willful appeasement to serving as an Iraqi asset. “I know that some people on the Hill have a different idea as to how Iraq and President Saddam Hussein should be handled. That is not my concern,” Annan said at the time, and he added, “The U.N. is not in the business of taking out any president. In our organization that is illegal.”

“Kofi’s big mistake was coming back from Baghdad and making too much of a thing about a great act of diplomacy with a dictator,” a former Clinton State Department official said, adding, “I think he learned something from it, which is you’ve got to be extraordinarily careful when you’re doing this, and avoid a lot of the theatrics and the color commentary, because

“I think, Hayward, one can just slow down and still smell the roses.”

you're going to piss somebody off who you're going to need." Annan certainly kept a much lower profile last fall. He didn't even tell anyone in his Secretariat what he was doing when he picked up the phone two days after Bush's speech and invited himself to a meeting of foreign ministers from the Arab League, who had gathered in the margins of the General Assembly. "We suddenly found him leaving—where is he going?" his chief of staff, Iqbal Riza, recalled.

"I told them I wanted to attend their meeting because they were pretty worried about what was going on, and it wasn't enough for them to be worried," Annan said. "They had to send a message to Saddam, that this is a new situation and he should not just play games." The Iraqi foreign minister was at the meeting, and the next day Annan received word that Saddam was willing to allow the inspectors back, without any conditions. He helped the Iraqis draft a letter saying as much, and he announced the breakthrough on September 16th. There were no crowds at the door this time around, no talk of sacred duties. The feeling at the U.N. was that there is nothing quite like the looming threat of overwhelming unilateral action to make multilateralism work.

Iraq's abrupt reversal in September caught everyone off guard. Experience offered no reason to believe in it, but the momentum of the course Bush had set left no alternative. And, strikingly, even as America has appeared to be marching for six months now along an inexorable path to war, since those few days at the U.N. in September when Annan set the tone and Bush raised the stakes, the story of the Iraq crisis in the Security Council has been entirely technical. In negotiating a new resolution, the Americans and the British had originally wanted any Iraqi violation of the weapons-inspection regime to be punishable by force, and the French, backed by Russia and a comparatively disinterested China, wanted to require that a second resolution be passed before military action might be taken. In the end, they agreed that the Council would at least have to be consulted and given a chance to debate the issue before Iraq incurred what the resolution rather coyly called "serious consequences." Although Iraqi regime change was not on the Council's agenda—officially, the issue was disarmament—everybody knew what that phrase meant, and the steady massing of American forces in and around the Persian Gulf insured that nobody would forget.

"While the chef's dishes tonight are rather bland, his ideas are fresh and appealing."

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Annan's part in this debate was to stay in the background, talking constantly by phone with the Council ambassadors and the foreign ministers and heads of state of the P-5, urging patience and endurance in the negotiations. Colin Powell, who calls Annan a good friend, frequently speaks with him several times a week. "He is open, he listens, he doesn't roll over, and he always tries to do what's right," Powell said to me. "In the toughest of times, he is always there to give us a sanity check." Annan's guiding interest was to preserve unity on the Council, whatever it should decide, and on November 8th, when the Council passed Resolution 1441 with a vote of fifteen to zero, the feeling in the room was that—at least for the moment—everybody had won. The U.N. had redeemed itself, Powell said—"It showed its relevance, it showed its importance"—and he added, "If a war comes it won't be because George Bush wanted a war, or Kofi failed to stop a war. It's because Saddam Hussein was responsible for a war." After all, he told me, "Diplomacy is always a little bit harder than just saying, 'This is what I want to do—everybody fall in.' It is a body of sovereign nations, not a rifle platoon that you can order around."

But wars are always waged in the name of peace. In this case, nobody seriously doubted that the Iraqis had been pursuing their weapons programs, or believed that they would comply sufficiently with the resolution to satisfy the Bush Administration. So while reviving inspections was the only chance of averting a war, wasn't it also a way of giving international authority to a war? In order to keep the United States in the U.N., had the U.N. boxed itself in? "I do worry about that," Annan said. "That bothers me—that the U.N. may be used as a rubber stamp, yah. I think there will come a time where the line might be drawn, where there may be divisions—serious divisions which may not be bridgeable." But when the U.N.'s two highest ideals—multilateralism and peace—stand at odds, how does one choose? As a rule, a former political adviser to Annan said, "Kofi would say better a legitimate war than disunity and a sidelined U.N. In this respect, he's truly a son of the system, an institutional man."

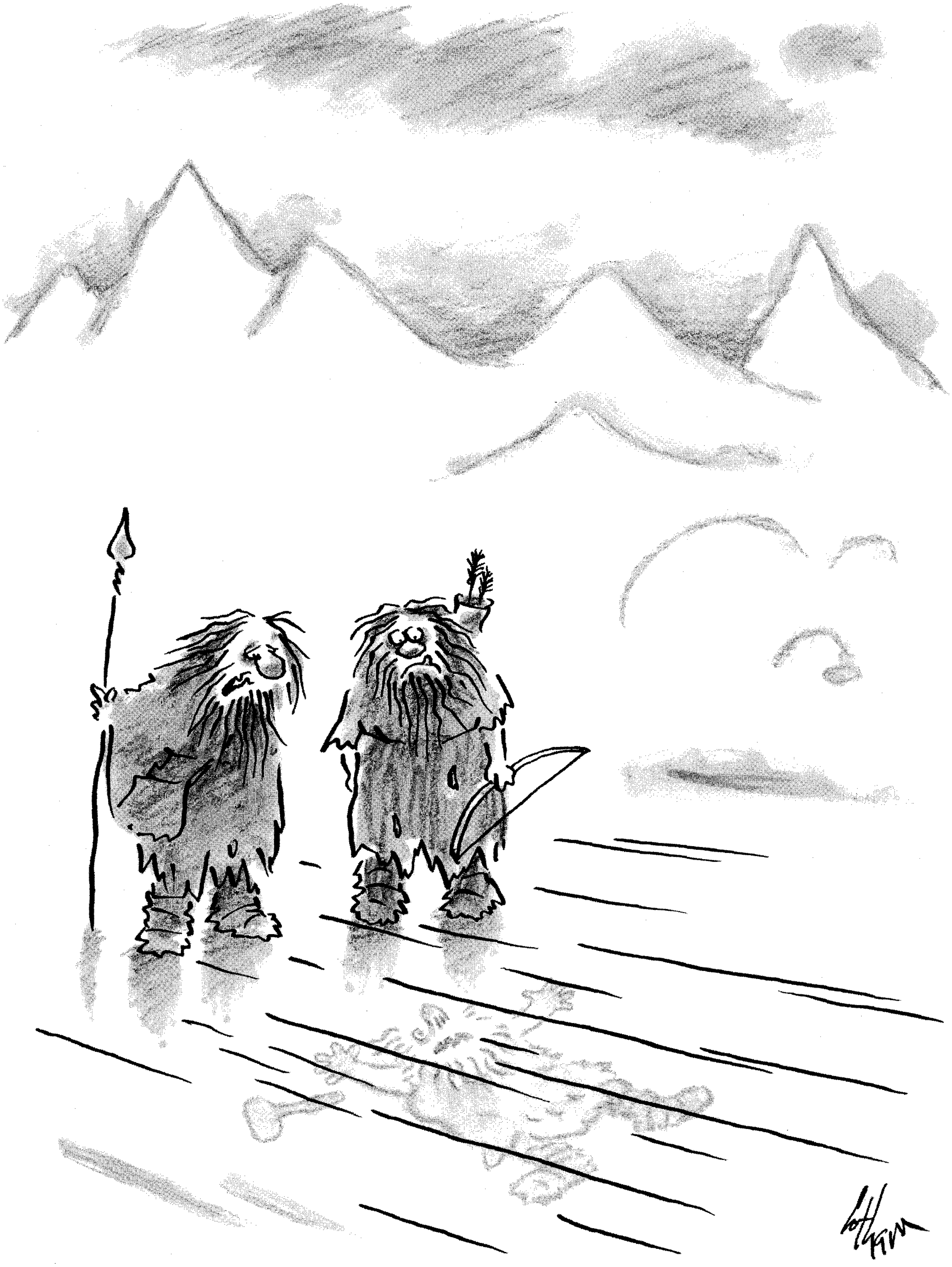
When Kofi Annan was a boy in the Gold Coast, as Ghana was known under British rule, the big idea was independence. He was just nine in 1947, when India's example inspired members of the colony's educated and professional classes to form a party, the United Gold Coast Convention, to campaign for self-rule. The party hired a secretary named Kwame Nkrumah, who soon became—and remained, until Annan came to prominence—the world's most famous Ghanaian. Nkrumah's story is instructive, because it formed the backdrop for Annan's coming of age, and because it is a story of a deliberate political life, driven by ambition, defiance, and fixed ideas, which makes it entirely unlike Annan's story. Nkrumah, the son of a village goldsmith, was a schoolteacher who scrimped and saved to buy a ticket to America, where he enrolled in a black college, experienced segregation, earned a bachelor's degree in economics and sociology, worked in a soap factory, preached in black churches, read Marx and Lenin, earned a bachelor's degree in theology, sold fish in Harlem, did graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania, slept on park benches, washed dishes on a cruise ship, earned a master's degree in education, joined the Freemasons, taught Greek history, then moved to London, published a pamphlet ("Towards Colonial Freedom"), wrote most of a thesis on logical positivism for a Ph.D. in philosophy, joined a salon whose habitués included future African independence leaders—Hastings Banda (Malawi), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), and Julius Nyerere (Tanzania)—and returned to Ghana in 1947, at the age of thirty-eight, with an idea: nonviolent boycott. The next year, after joining in a peaceful march for autonomy in Accra, the capital, during which people were shot dead by police, Nkrumah was arrested and thrown in jail. In 1949, after he was released, he started his own movement, the Convention People's Party, renouncing the gradualist approach of his former employers and demanding full independence at once. Years of marches, boycotts, rallies, private debates, arrests, and releases followed. In March of 1957 Ghana, with Nkrumah as its leader, became the first sub-Saharan African colony to be granted independence.

In that same year, Annan graduated from Mfantsipim, a boarding school for boys, the country's oldest and most prestigious secondary school. Its Web site boasts of "many influential products," an "uncounted number of men of unexampled distinction," and Annan of course is first among them. The school was founded by the Methodist Church and run, in Annan's time already, by Africans, who followed a standard British curriculum and colonial ethos. Students were taught that come Christmas snow was not unusual; they played cricket; they wore uniforms with neckties—"shorts and sports and all that," Annan said. This was his Ghana, a crossroads culture, the mid-twentieth-century version of globalization (as always, a function of empire). Although his father was a Fante nobleman, his standing as a chief was largely honorary. He worked as an executive of the United Africa Company, a subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch multinational corporation Unilever. The job kept his household on the move from city to city: a few years in Kumasi, a few years in Accra, a few years in Bekwai. Home for Annan was no fixed place.

Annan had three sisters, two older and his twin. Being a twin in Ghana, he said, was not as big a deal as it can be elsewhere in Africa: "In Benin, for example, you cannot say no to a mother of twins—you have to give her everything she wants—and in other places they try to kill them. For us it's O.K. It was a bit special at that time." But he did not elaborate. Annan is not given to talking much about his family or his early years. He does not shy away from the subject, but the way he recounts his memories of Ghana is curiously impersonal, as if he were summing up someone else's life or something he had read in a book. Perhaps this is because he has lived outside the country for all but two of the past forty-four years. Although he says, "I think Ghana is still home," he tends not to speak of himself so much as a Ghanaian but, more universally, as an African—an inheritance he characterizes fondly and selectively as a deliberative approach to life, marked always by a breadth of mind and generosity of spirit.

"I feel profoundly African, my roots are deeply African, and the things that I was taught as a child are very important to me," he told me. "Growing up in Africa, you had lots of people around you—cousins, aunts, grandparents, and friends of the family—so there always were people to talk to, people to seek advice from, people to play with, and a sense of friendship and love." He seemed eager to extract a connection between his earliest influences and his current life as a diplomat. "Patience was very much part of the culture," he said. "And this is why I sometimes find it very difficult to understand the African dictators of today, because in traditional African society people discussed issues. They talked and talked—you know, the tradition of palaver, you go under the tree and you talk. If you can't solve the problem, you meet the next day and you keep talking till you find a solution. The Africans have an incredible capacity for forgiveness and reconciliation and hospitality. I see the Africa I grew up in in somebody like Mandela, who is able to forgive and to reconcile. I don't see it in these brutal leaders."

Unlike Nelson Mandela, who is also of aristocratic pedigree, Annan took no part in his country's liberation. "I was too young to be involved personally," he said. The only rebellious action he likes to recall from his youth is a hunger strike he staged to protest the quality of the



"Sometimes spring can't get here soon enough."

LARGENT
& COMPANY

"Honey, I'm home."

food at his boarding school, and it worked: the menu was improved. But defiance has never been Annan's style, and while politics fascinated him, the tug of ideology found little traction. He was not disposed to taking sides. In boarding school, he told me, he and his friends "were quite engaged, quite informed, following the struggle," and he said, "Sometimes we even role-played: who would belong to which party, and this sort of thing, arguing the point." Forty years after his graduation, and Ghana's independence, in his first months as Secretary-General, Annan sent a brief congratulatory message to be read to the graduating class of Mfantsipim, in which he recalled a lesson from his days there:

> Once, I remember, Reverend Brandful took out a large white sheet with a black dot in the middle, draped it over the blackboard and asked us: "What do you see?"
>
> We all answered: "The black dot."
>
> "Why only the black dot?" he responded. "Why only the negative? What about the vast white spaces around?"
>
> He was reminding us to always look beyond the obvious and beneath the surface, to bear in mind the larger picture, not to focus just on the blemishes. He was teaching us also to remember that there is more than one side to a story, and more than one answer to a question.

Annan's executive assistant in the Secretariat, Elisabeth Lindenmayer, is a Frenchwoman who was born in Africa, in a small village in the bush of colonial Upper Volta—now Burkina Faso—where her father was stationed as a paratrooper. Lindenmayer has known Annan for nineteen years and worked at his side for more than a decade. She retains a deep affection for the continent where she spent her youth, and she offered an anthropological interpretation of her boss's faith in multiple perspectives. "It's very African to believe in symbols, in things that you don't see, in the unquantifiable," she said. Still, it is difficult to have things more than one way, and when it came to the political drama of his youth, Annan was genuinely undecided.

"My father was with the United Gold Coast Convention, not with Nkrumah's party but the other group," he told me, "and as a young man I think I was influenced by the discussions going on at home with my father and his friends, and others. But at the same time I was also emotionally drawn to the struggle for independence, and some of the statements Nkrumah was making—that we must stand on our own, we must have our own destiny in our hands." By Annan's account, it was only after the fact, when the British government was gone and there were Ghanaians in charge, that he grasped the full import of the liberation struggle. "We suddenly realized that change was possible—you know, this big important thing, the independence that seems so far away, that you've heard people talk of for years, suddenly it's there, we get it," he said, and he added, "Not only is change possible but one can effect change, one can be a participant, one can be a change agent and play a role. It was a very exciting and electrifying period, and of course we all felt that we had a role to play in building the new nation." Then, after a moment, he said, "When I joined the U.N."—in 1962—"I said, maximum two years and I'll go back. And here I am, forty years later."

Even after Nkrumah took power, his people used to summon his followers to action with the call: "Come and express your anger!" This would not have stirred a response in Annan, to whom anger is so nearly alien that he cannot quite account for its absence in his makeup except by rationalization. While he admits to occasional passing spasms of frustration or impatience, he dismisses anger as "a negative energy" and says, "I think when you have so much to do you can't really afford it. So to be rancoring, and let it linger, and be grumpy, and bear grudges, and all this—it's something that has never been part of me, because I find not only is it not necessary but it takes a lot out of you, it distracts."

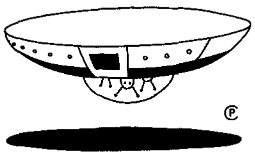
Within the Secretariat, Lindenmayer

is known as the only person to have ever seen Annan thoroughly lose his cool, and that was long before he had surfaced in the public eye, back in the eighties, when he was running the U.N.'s office of human resources, and the conduct of the appointment-and-promotion committee ignited his displeasure. "If somebody does not get angry often and suddenly gets very angry, I can tell you it's very powerful," Lindenmayer told me. She stiffened in her chair. "He was like a lion roaring, he was so angry at them," she said, and she went on, "I tell you, he's angry with his whole body—with his eyes. His anger comes from every single part of him. His voice goes down. It takes a register, like an organ, which is the lowest one. It's very, very frightening when he gets angry."

Others speak of once or twice seeing Annan's eyes narrow in a flicker of annoyance, but these are rare sightings, and tend to be mentioned with proprietary pride, as evidence of the speaker's inside position. As a rule, people who have worked or spent time with Annan are as much at a loss to explain his imperturbability as he is. Sir Brian Urquhart, who served in the U.N. Secretariat from 1945 to 1986, and has written extensively about the organization, put the problem as succinctly as anyone. "Why he doesn't get angry, God only knows, but he doesn't, and up to a point that's a great thing," Urquhart told me, but, he said, "It's very hard to tell what Kofi thinks about people, because he's such a nice chap. I mean, for example, if I was him, I'd be furious with Saddam Hussein, after the way he monkeyed with him in 1998."

So it was without a hint of bitterness that Annan said to me, "I was disappointed by the way things turned out in the end, once we'd achieved independence." That feeling came with time, and mostly from a distance. In the first flush of his awakening to the world's limitless possibilities for change, Annan went on to study at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, where he quickly became vice-president of the national student union, and he wound up at a meeting of West African student leaders in Sierra Leone. There, somebody suggested that he apply to a program, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, to give young Africans with leadership promise the opportunity to study in America. He did, and in the fall of 1959 he arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota, on a scholarship to Macalester College, a small liberal-arts school with a strong internationalist tradition and the unusual custom of flying the U.N. flag below the Stars and Stripes. He was twenty-one years old, it was his first trip overseas, and the plan was to stay a year, then "go back and make a contribution." But he did so well at Macalester that the school gave him a second year's scholarship to complete his degree as an economics major, and in this way, with each opportunity abroad leading to the next, his plan to make a life in Ghana kept getting postponed.

Annan had arrived in America just as the civil-rights movement was gathering force with marches, sit-ins, and boycotts, and he says it struck him as "almost a continuation" of what he'd witnessed at home. "The culture was different, the approach was different, but the objective and the desire was the same. So you could empathize," he told me. Once again, he followed the local developments with interest, without feeling any involvement. His closest friend was a Swiss political scientist, Roy Preiswerk, who took an avid interest in the issues of decolonization, and became a pioneer in development studies. Once when they were out walking with a Korean friend along the banks of Minnehaha Creek, they were accosted by a group of young drunks, who passed by in a boat and began shouting, "What's this black doing here? Go back where you came from!" Annan recalls that his friends were angrier than he was. "It was interesting to see," he said.



In the summer of 1961, a young adviser to foreign students at Macalester started a program to take some of his advisees on extended road trips through the American hinterland. He called the operation Ambassadors of Friendship, after the car that was donated to him for the trip, a Nash Ambassador, and Annan was one of the four students to join him on the excursion. They travelled for two months, and Annan recalls going into a restaurant and seeing two waitresses whispering to each other. He heard the older tell the younger, "You tell them, you tell them," and, he said, "She almost rushed to us and blurted it out—'I'm sorry, we don't serve blacks.' " What struck him was her embarrassment, and, telling the story, he chuckled softly, as if he were embarrassed for her. Susan Linnee, a Minnesotan who established a lifelong friendship with Annan in those years, and who is now the Associated Press bureau chief in Nairobi, remembers hearing a much more pointed story from that trip: "They went somewhere and Kofi needed a haircut. The guy said, 'We don't cut niggers' hair,' and he said, 'I'm not a nigger, I'm an African,' and the guy said, 'That's O.K., come on, siddown'—and cut his hair."

What struck Linnee about this was "the difference between Africans' and African-Americans' thinking about race." She said, "Kofi didn't think about it. It was never a question of race for him," and she noticed that it was the same for a Nigerian aristocrat he hung around with. "They didn't think they were in any way involved. They didn't even think of colonialism as a matter of race," she said. "Kofi in his entire life never experienced anything that was any kind of struggle. I think he thought it was nice that Ghana became independent, but there was never any sense of drama to it." Then as now, Linnee found Annan to be, above all, "a facilitator," someone who sought the common ground among people and tried to bring them together. He liked America. He felt at ease here, as he felt everywhere. He was quick of mind and body, and set a record for the sixty-yard dash at Macalester that stood for many years. Linnee remembers him at parties, teaching people to dance the Hi-Life. "He's the ultimate smooth dancer, where nothing moves," she said.

In the autumn of 1961, Annan grew his beard. He had moved on to Geneva on a Carnegie fellowship to do graduate work in economics, and he stopped shaving his chin and upper lip until the goatee appeared. "People now think it is part of his elegant look," said Georges Abi-Saab, an Egyptian who was in Annan's circle at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva and is now a professor emeritus there. "At that time it was a symbol, a kind of distinctive sign. It was a Lumumba beard, and many of the young African people had this Lumumba beard." Patrice Lumumba, the first (and last) popularly elected leader of the Congo, was killed in January of 1961, and the crisis in the Congo, which triggered one of the first massive and agonized U.N. military interventions, dominated the international headlines, especially when U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld was killed in a plane crash on a diplomatic mission between warring factions there. Both men quickly acquired the status of martyrs, and although Annan now speaks frequently of the influence of Hammarskjöld, it was Lumumba who captured his imagination at the time. "Lumumba symbolized African nationalism and progressive nation-building—even if he didn't live up to it," Abi-Saab said to me, and he recalled with passion those days when Third Worldism and the nonaligned movement—"a kind of progressive open nationalism"—were in the air. "That was the context in which we met," he said of Annan, and he added, "It was a period of euphoric optimism among young people of the Third World, who thought they could change their countries and participate in changing the world. That was the general atmosphere, and he was very much in that trend."

Abi-Saab, who described himself as "a bit of a purist" in political matters, is impressed that Annan kept his beard. Few Africans from that period did, and he likes to think the facial hair means that the Secretary-General has remained loyal to the ideals of his youth. But the more he talked, the more it became clear that Abi-Saab was unsure exactly where Annan had stood in the politically charged debates of their student days: "He could perceive what others say, and perhaps with hindsight I'd say also what others want. Most of us have our sympathies and antipathies. Kofi, on the other hand, was someone who was on good terms with everybody. And this proved to be a great asset for him. I thought, and I still believe, he had his own convictions, and he believed in them and so forth. But he was not very aggressive in expressing them or defending them in a way that hurt the others. He always had a very smooth touch."

Abi-Saab allowed that memory can be distorted by intervening impressions, and he said, "We were all much more passionate then. Life somehow cools you down." But he wondered whether a life spent in the U.N., a system that exists in the name of principle yet survives by compromise, might not be especially cooling, and he said of Annan, "Remember that he spent from 1962—forty years—in the machine, and he has been a consummate user of the machine as well as being part of it."

"I'm sure 'till death do you part' was only an estimate."

When I told Annan that I'd spoken to Abi-Saab, he remembered the heated debates—about "how we were going to change the world"—with his bearded friends in Geneva. "It was sort of the folly and dreams of the young," he said, and once again he spoke of his disappointment in the betrayed promises of independence. "There was disillusionment in the sense that we could have done much better," he said. "We could have given our people a much better life and we failed them. I mean, when you take my own country at the time of independence, we had in economic terms about the same situation as Malaysia. We had almost the same amount of reserves in the bank, and you look at where Malaysia is today and where Ghana is today, and I say it's a question of instability and mismanagement." Like so many bold liberation leaders, Nkrumah was a bad president. The monomania that had served him in revolution translated, when he sat in the statehouse, into dictatorship and unhappiness for Ghana: a cult of personality, a clampdown on free expression, economic decline, extreme corruption, and finally, in 1966, while Nkrumah was on a state visit to China, a military coup. He died in exile in 1972, and returned home in a coffin.

Annan didn't leave Ghana to escape misrule. A chance encounter had presented him with an opportunity, and he told himself he would return better prepared to help his country. He went to Geneva in the same spirit. He had no political aspirations, nor did he impress those who met him and admired him as notably ambitious. His mind was practical; in pursuing his degrees in economics, he anticipated following his father into the business world. But, as his own scope broadened during his student years in America and Europe, he watched his prospects at home steadily shrinking; at the same time, he saw that he was valued as an African in the international sphere. The United Nations was growing fast, absorbing newly decolonized nations. Nineteen-sixty had been the Year of Africa, with sixteen new states from the continent admitted to the General Assembly, and the Charter requires that the U.N.'s staff be hired to reflect as closely as possible its membership. In the early summer of 1962, when Annan left graduate school to become an administrative and budget officer at the headquarters of the World Health Organization in Geneva, he entered the U.N. bureaucracy with P-1 status, the lowest possible rank in the international civil service, and for nearly thirty years he ascended through the administrative and management hierarchy, a functionary who quickly mastered each new task put before him and drew no public attention.

Hey, we're working our asses off here!
The bastard won't even make eye contact!
The kid loves us, but that and a buck-fifty'll buy you a hot dog!
I'd like to rip his goddam throat open!
Shanahan

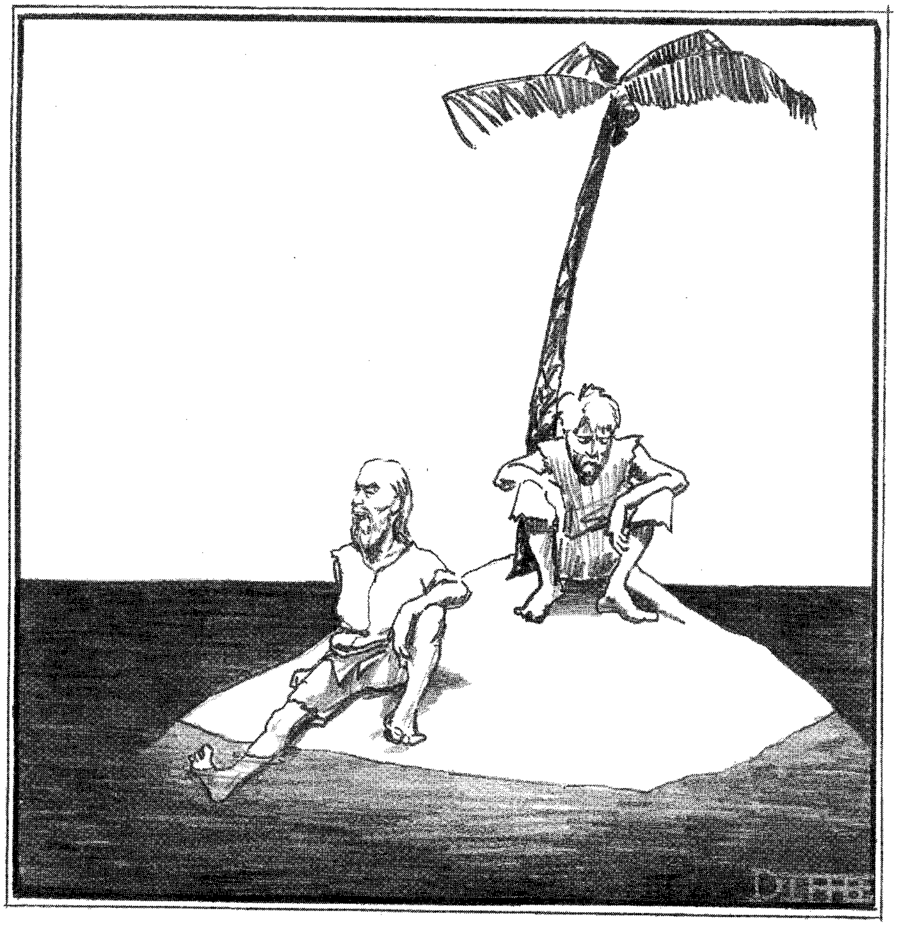
* * *

Annan did not commit himself to the organization all at once. He still wanted to do his bit for Africa, and in 1965 he arranged to get posted to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to work at the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa. He spent six years there, just as the Organization of African Unity was being created. "There was lots of political energy—electricity in the air," Annan said. "All these leaders came to Addis to talk about Africa and its development, and we were on the economic side, and you could see that if we all did what we were supposed to and pooled our efforts and worked well, we could make a difference."

In fact, Ethiopia was sliding into desperation under the corrupt reign of Emperor Haile Selassie. By the time Annan packed up to leave, in 1971, thousands of Ethiopians were facing famine in regions that had fallen into Selassie's disfavor. Even as a hub of pan-Africanist enthusiasm, Ethiopia presented a troubling scene. Among the continent's new leaders who passed through Addis, those who worked for the common good were outnumbered by abusive despots. The late sixties and early seventies were the glory days of such men as the self-deifying kleptocrat Mobutu Sese Seko, of Congo (or Zaire, as he came to call it); the lunatic President for Life (later Emperor) Jean-Bédel Bokassa, of the Central African Republic; and Milton Obote, of Uganda, who had connived with his Army chief, Idi Amin, to stage a coup and reinstall himself as a military dictator in 1966, only to be ousted for real by Amin in 1971.

Annan's gloss on his Ethiopian sojourn is typical of the way he speaks of his first three decades with the U.N., which are summed up on his two-page official biography in a single long sentence that consists entirely of a selective list of his successive job titles. For most of this dimly lit time in his career, the U.N. was largely hamstrung by the divisions of the Cold War. The paralysis was most pronounced on the Security Council, where the great powers of the P-5 used their opposing vetoes—or threats of a veto—to control most matters in which they had a stake. As a diplomatic salon, the U.N. served the crucial function of keeping the superpowers talking to one another, and in confrontations like the Cuban missile crisis the public debate may have helped avert a world war. But there was no question of seeking, or failing to seek, a resolution when America went to war in Vietnam, or when the Soviet Union took over Afghanistan. The Council's deadlock in those decades extended equally to the myriad wars fought by Soviet and American proxies elsewhere in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The General Assembly took up some of the political slack, but such actions as the passage of a resolution equating Zionism with racism served as a reminder that even when multilateralism functions, majority consensus is no guarantee of sobriety, or proof against hostile intentions.

Inevitably, the effects of Cold War factionalism and stalemate among the U.N.'s member states tainted the organization's internal order as well. Following the death of Hammarskjöld in 1961, the office of Secretary-General was filled by bland figures who commanded little reverence from their staffs and who understood that the first requirement of their job was to keep a low profile. Within the international bureaucracy, it was a time of stagnation, and if demoralization and corruption were not the rule, neither were they exceptional. A post at the U.N. was regarded as a cozy sinecure, with good pay, a diplomatic passport, and bankers' hours. Jobs were frequently traded as political favors, and at times were simply bought and sold. For those who were content merely to keep their desks clean, a sense of serving a worthy larger



"I spy something blue."

purpose lightened the burden of idleness. But for anyone animated by a desire for consequence, the U.N. system in the sixties, seventies, and eighties could often be a source of frustration and restlessness.

In 1971, when Annan left Ethiopia, he took a year's leave to pick up a master's degree in management, as a Sloan Fellow at M.I.T. Although he returned to serve the U.N. for a series of brief postings—in New York, with a peacekeeping force in Egypt, and with the High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva—he could not forget that he had once intended to pursue a very different life. Annan's year in Minnesota had turned into fifteen years as an expatriate, and in 1974 he accepted an offer to manage the Ghana Tourist Development Company, setting up hotels along the coast. He was then married to a Nigerian woman (his first wife); he had a daughter, Ama, and a son, Kojo; Susan Linnee remembers Annan telling her that when they arrived in Ghana his daughter's response was "Daddy, why are there so many black people here?"

He had gone back—"to see, to help," he said—but it was a bad time; Ghana was under military rule, and he did not find himself at home. "So after a couple of years, I left again," he told me, adding, "I think probably if I had felt when I went to Ghana that there was space and I could do what I thought can be done and could find like-minded people for us to work together, I probably would have stayed, I probably would not have returned to the U.N." Shashi Tharoor, the Under-Secretary-General, described Annan's foray into the Ghanaian business world, and his retreat from it, as "emblematic of the way people like he and I feel, that one of the reasons we want to serve the international system is we've grown up in societies which need the international system to work well." When Annan signed back on at the U.N. in 1976, it had been fourteen years since he entered the system, and it would be fourteen more before he was tapped for his first political mission.

With the end of the Cold War, in the late eighties, the Security Council was suddenly able to find common ground on many outstanding crises. All at once, it seemed, the Council was dispatching U.N. missions everywhere: to end the war between Iraq and Iran; to oversee the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan; to supervise elections in Namibia and Nicaragua; then on to El Salvador, Cambodia, and Mozambique. The Council's decision to authorize the use of force to reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 reflected its newfound spirit of international coöperation. The violation of the sovereignty of a nation was what the organization had been created to oppose.

Annan had risen to the post of Assistant Secretary-General in charge of personnel. It was in that capacity that he was sent to Baghdad during the buildup to the Gulf War, to seek the release of hundreds of U.N. international staffers, and other foreign workers, who were being held hostage. He succeeded, and was sent back to Baghdad the next year, after the war—now as the chief financial officer of the U.N. system—to work out a blueprint for the "oil for food" deal. Then, in 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali appointed him to the No. 2 post in the newly established Department of Peacekeeping Operations. A year later, he became Under-Secretary-General in charge of the whole department.

The speed with which Annan was handed these new responsibilities was a reflection not only of his capabilities but also of the improvisational approach of the U.N. Secretariat to the unprecedented burden of its multiplying missions. In 1989, peacekeeping had been handled by a suboffice of the political department, staffed by six people who oversaw around fifteen thousand troops, whose main task was to monitor front-line truces in such places as Cyprus and Kashmir. Four years later, when Annan took over the portfolio, there were thirteen U.N. peacekeeping missions in the field, with fifty-four thousand troops, and many of the newer missions were in countries where there was no real peace to keep: Cambodia, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and, within the year, Rwanda. With the exception of the mission to Cambodia, which was able to claim a deeply compromised success before it withdrew, all of these operations would meet with catastrophe on Annan's watch, at the end of which he was elevated to Secretary-General. It was "a baptism of fire," Iqbal Riza, his chief of staff, told me, and for anyone less steadfastly uninflammable it might have been an immolation.

History is largely a saga of unfinished business. So, on the Monday morning last November when the first team of United Nations weapons inspectors to visit Iraq in four years stepped onto the tarmac at Saddam International Airport in Baghdad, Kofi Annan was in Sarajevo, telling three women representing the Mothers of Srebrenica—an association of survivors of the 1995 massacre in the U.N.-designated "safe area"—that he was happy to have the opportunity to meet them. "I know the tragedy you've been through," he said. "It is something that one can never forget." Annan kept his opening remarks at the meeting brief. "I want to hear from you," he said. "I want to hear about your concerns. It's a difficult and a painful situation. We can't turn the clock back, so we have to collectively see how we can best deal with the situation and move forward."

The slaughter of as many as seven thousand Bosnian Muslims, nearly all of them male, in Srebrenica, in July of 1995, was the largest genocidal massacre in Europe since the Nazis were forced to stop exterminating Jews. And, as Annan later observed, in a report that he presented to the General Assembly in November of 1999:

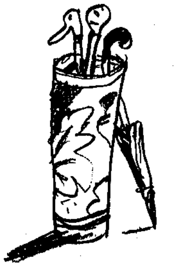
> The fall of Srebrenica is also shocking because the enclave's inhabitants believed that the authority of the United Nations Security Council, the presence of UNPROFOR [U.N. Protection Force] peacekeepers, and the might of NATO airpower, would ensure their safety. Instead, the Bosnian Serb forces ignored the Security Council, pushed aside the UNPROFOR troops, and assessed correctly that airpower would not be used to stop them. They overran the safe area of Srebrenica with ease, and then proceeded to depopulate the territory within forty-eight hours. Their leaders then engaged in high-level negotiations with representatives of the international community while their forces on the ground executed and buried thousands of men and boys within a matter of days.

The report quotes from the indictment for war crimes of the former Bosnian Serb President, Radovan Karadzic, and his Army chief, Ratko Mladic, and tells of "scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history" at Srebrenica: "thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered, children killed before their mothers' eyes, a grandfather forced to eat the liver of his own grandson." Srebrenica was just one of six safe areas established by the U.N. under Security Council mandates during the Bosnian war, and as many as twenty thousand people were killed in these enclaves. The U.N. safe areas were among the most unsafe places on earth in the mid-nineties.

Seven years after the slaughter was brought to an end by NATO bombing and the Dayton peace accords, Annan was in Sarajevo to mark the closing of the U.N. mission there, and his visit with the Mothers of Srebrenica was the last event on his schedule. "Yes, there is peace, but there is no justice," the first mother told him. "With the United Nations in our country, we got our borders—they have done a lot—but there are still many things to be done. You know that Karadzic and Mladic are still at large." Despite a five-million-dollar reward offered by the State Department, the two men continue to live in the former Yugoslavia, unmolested by NATO troops. "We know it is not the job of the U.N. mission to arrest them here," the woman said to Annan, "but we kindly ask you as a human being, because you meet a lot of people, to tell those people that this is really becoming ridiculous—that even small children now realize that it's a game." Another mother said that twenty-two of her family members were still missing, among the more than five thousand victims of Srebrenica whose remains have never been found. "If they did not have the right to live, please help us to find their bodies—to bury them in dignity as every human being deserves," she said. She reminded Annan that in the Netherlands there was still an ongoing inquiry into the massacre. Dutch troops made up the UNPROFOR contingent that essentially handed Srebrenica over to Mladic. "Mr. Kofi Annan," she said, "if we ask you to come there and say what you know as a human being, not as a politician, would you do that?"

In his report, Annan had acknowledged that, as the head of peacekeeping, he was among those responsible for the abandonment of the people of Srebrenica. But, despite the prominence of his position, he remained in the background of the horror. The retreat of U.N. missions in the face of slaughter had by then become an agonizingly familiar spectacle, and Annan had learned to keep a low profile as a technocratic middleman in the machinery of international dysfunction. The excited, can-do spirit of the immediate post-Cold War period at the U.N. had been effectively extinguished in October, 1993, when eighteen American soldiers were killed in Somalia. A week later, the U.S.S. Harlan County, a Navy ship carrying peacekeepers to Haiti, was greeted by a lightly armed mob of protesters on a dock in Port-au-Prince and retreated back to sea.

"The impression has been created that the easiest way to disrupt a peacekeeping operation is to kill Americans," Annan complained early in 1994, following a talk in New York in which he rebuked the Security Council for following America's lead and recoiling from its commitments. A few months later, at the start of the genocide in Rwanda, the Clinton Administration called for the complete withdrawal of U.N. peacekeepers there, even though no American troops were involved. The force was reduced from twenty-five hundred to two hundred and seventy men, who could do little more than watch as eight hundred thousand people were massacred in a hundred days.



As the U.N. ricocheted from one killing field to another during this period, its effectiveness was hobbled not only by the difficulty of mustering troops and matériel but by the Security Council's antipathy toward crossing "the Mogadishu line" from strictly neutral peacekeeping to overt taking of sides. In Bosnia, as in Rwanda, however, passive neutrality was tantamount to complicity with the perpetrators of "ethnic cleansing" and mass murder. "We will not just swallow the fact that we were protected by the U.N. and were betrayed anyway," one of the Mothers of Srebrenica told Annan. "We really believed the United Nations. And what happened? They deceived us." She thought that the U.N. should pay the survivors some sort of compensation.

The mothers interspersed their toughest sentiments with expressions of gratitude for Annan's attention, and for the solicitousness and assistance given them by his emissaries in Sarajevo over the years. But, for all their cordiality, there was not a word of forgiveness in their remarks, and Annan did not ask for it. "I feel your pain, and I understand what you've gone through," he said. "What you went through was not anything any of us can pardon." He called the suggestion that the U.N. had a responsibility to the survivors, and should pay them compensation, "a novel idea." But it would require Security Council approval, he said, and—"quite frankly, speaking honestly, not to raise your hopes—I don't think they will entertain that thought."

Annan's impressively detailed report on Srebrenica describes the enfeebling process of triangulation among the Security Council, the U.N. Secretariat, and UNPROFOR troop contributors and commanders, but its ultimate effect is to obscure rather than to clarify individual responsibility. Individual actors are more often identified in the narrative by job title than by name. The profusion of these actors, and of the more broadly anonymous institutions or governments they represented, along with the combined weight of their misjudgments, overcautiousness, gullibility, and sheer cowardice in the face of a party of notorious ethnic cleansers and exterminators who had repeatedly hoodwinked them in the past, creates an impression of collective responsibility that comes uncomfortably close to a spirit of collective exculpation. In this respect, the report simultaneously exposes and replicates multilateralism in its most unctuous form, as a theatre of international damage control—a diplomatic safe area. What is missing, even more than a precise attribution of responsibility, is any notion of accountability, which is what the Mothers of Srebrenica seemed to be asking for.

Although Annan struck a tender note of reckoning in his farewell remarks to the mothers, it was not their plight that preoccupied him but that of the U.N. "In the kind of conflict we saw here, the third party has a vital role," he said. "What is worse is when nobody cares or pays any attention. The third party who gets up and says, 'This is enough, this cannot be acceptable, this cannot go on,' and tries to take steps to help, has an impact on encouraging the victims to fight, to resist, and to carry on. Sometimes they may be around to bear witness. They may not be able to resolve the conflict and solve all the problems, but it doesn't mean that they didn't try. It doesn't mean that the involvement of the third party focussing attention on the issue and getting the people to fight back is not something that we shouldn't treasure. I really wish things could have turned out otherwise, but the intentions of coming to help and coming to assist were good."

The "safe areas," however, weren't established to provide international witnesses to slaughter, much less to encourage anyone to fight back. They were set up as sanctuaries for the defenseless. The people of Srebrenica were assured that they would not be abandoned, and then the U.N. forces handed them over to their killers, without a word of protest from the Security Council or the Secretariat. Of course, as Annan said, in order to fail one first has to take steps to try to help. But to treasure the effort regardless of the results is kindergarten talk—or, worse, the language of martyrdom—and suggests a profound reluctance to acknowledge the nature of war.

Elisabeth Lindenmayer said that Annan has often told her that he learned a lot from being an athlete—most important, how to lose. "And to live is to learn how to lose as well," she said. "So everything becomes a lesson for him." Time and again, in talking to Annan's colleagues and friends, I was told that he has an ability to focus selflessly on the issues at hand, and on the interests of the U.N., which he truly believes are the interests of the world. "With Kofi it's never about him," John Ruggie, a political scientist at Harvard who worked as an adviser in Annan's Secretariat for four years, said. "His ego's just not involved." This is always spoken of as a virtue, and in many aspects of private and public life it is. But war calls also for martial values, pride, a personal stake—not just in your own life but in your cause, which in the U.N.'s case is every noncombatant's life. In his remarks to the Mothers of Srebrenica, Annan was speaking not only of Srebrenica but, more broadly, of Bosnia—and, yes, during the war the U.N. presence was, over all, much better than nothing. Is that really an acceptable standard for the man Lindenmayer calls "the moral conscience of the world"?

The sound bite that hit the international wires from Annan's visit to Sarajevo in November came from a press conference he had given at the parliament, where he called upon Saddam Hussein to comply with U.N. resolutions "for the sake of his people, regional stability, and world order." The Mothers of Srebrenica were last century's news, and Annan's visit to them was a courtesy call. On the same day, Korea announced for the first time that it had developed nuclear weapons; Israeli troops were battling Palestinians in Hebron and Gaza; a plan for the reunification of Cyprus that Annan had put forward a week earlier was being debated by Greeks and Turks; and the Nigerian government was trying to calm its people about a territorial dispute with Cameroon that Annan was also trying to mediate. There were riots in Colombia, troops in the streets of Caracas, antigovernment demonstrations in Haiti, a crackdown on dissent amid rumors of civil war in Kyrgyzstan.

Annan's true business is conducted with ambassadors, foreign ministers, prime ministers, and presidents. To keep in touch with his constituents, the governments of member states, he spends roughly a third of each year travelling; last year, he visited forty-

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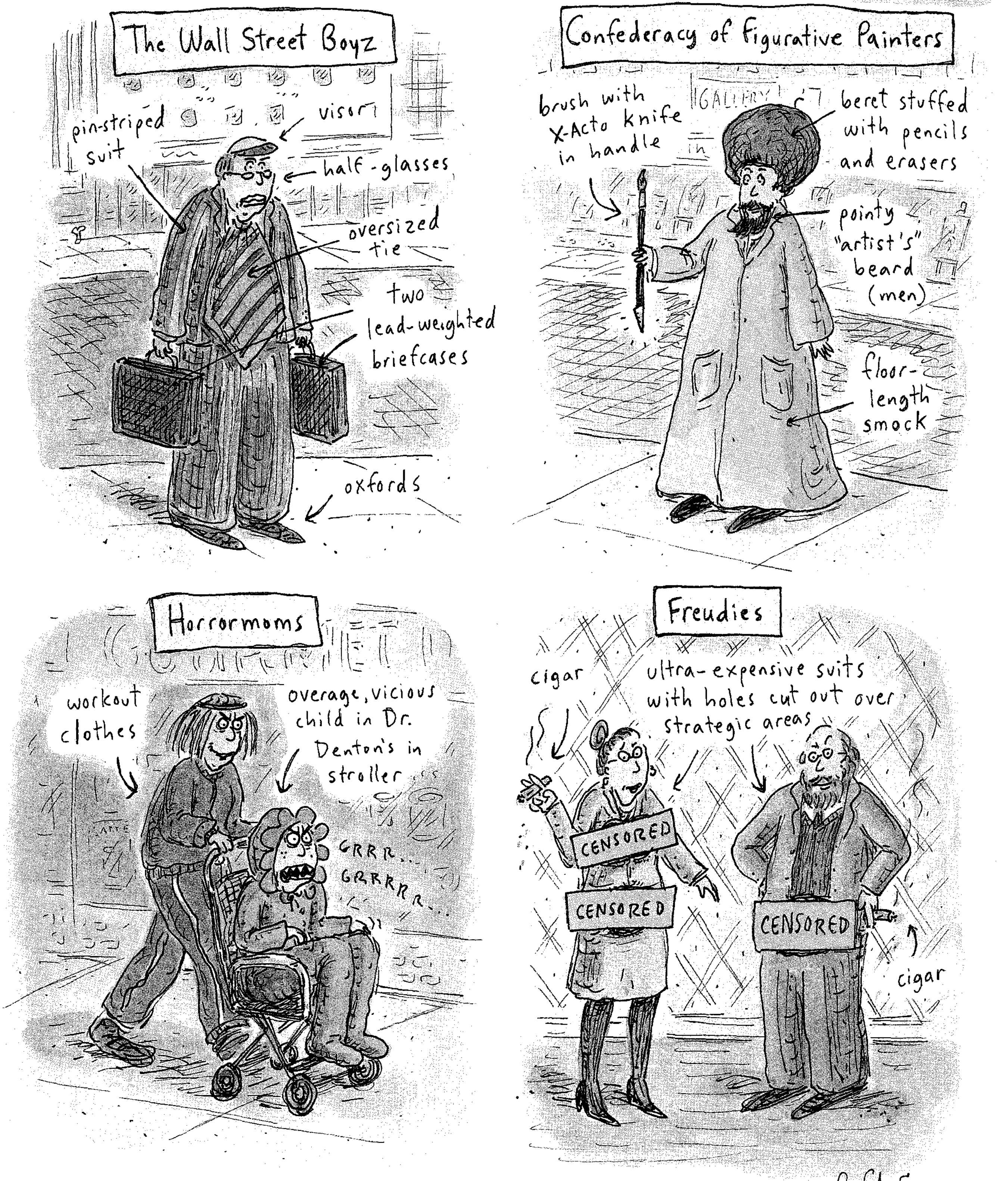
The Wall Street Boyz
pin-striped suit
visor
half-glasses
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two lead-weighted briefcases
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Confederacy of Figurative Painters
GALLERY
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beret stuffed with pencils and erasers
pointy "artist's" beard (men)
floor-length smock
Horrormoms
workout clothes
overage, vicious child in Dr. Denton's in stroller
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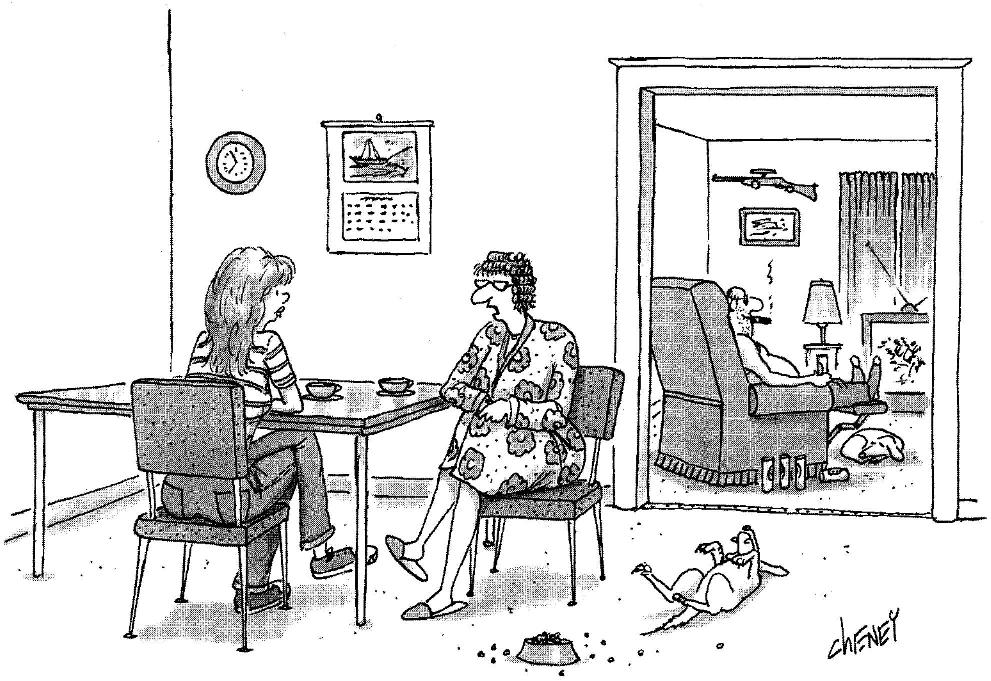
five countries, at least half a dozen of them twice. As he calls on one head of state after another, he frequently points out that the United Nations was not founded in the name of governments but of "we the peoples." For the U.N. to fulfill its mission, he said in his Nobel lecture, it must "focus, as never before, on improving the conditions of the individual men and women . . . whose claims to the most fundamental rights have too often been sacrificed in the supposed interests of the state or the nation." Whether the problem is "ethnic cleansing" or poverty, he said, "What begins with the failure to uphold the dignity of one life all too often ends with a calamity for entire nations." And he said to me, "It is very difficult to look around the world, at the suffering of people who can't even speak up, who don't have a say in decisions affecting their own future." But in Sarajevo, three such individuals had been gathered before him, and they did not need to be told about the cost of being ignored.

A few weeks after the publication of the Srebrenica report, Annan presided over the release of a similar report on the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The story of Rwanda is not only more appalling than that of Srebrenica on account of its scale but also because the outside world's disengagement from Rwanda was not the sort of tragedy of careless good intentions that Annan described in Sarajevo. It was a matter of deliberate policy, and for the Clinton Administration the evasion of the world's post-Holocaust commitment to prevent genocide could not properly be called a failure. Washington's policy was to leave Rwanda to its own devices, and in that it was successful. Nor did the United States have a hard time persuading the rest of the U.N. to back off. France's position, as a protective patron of Rwanda's genocidal regime, was at least as compromising to the formulation of a credible international response. In fact, Rwanda itself had a seat on the Security Council, and its representative was accorded all diplomatic respect as he baldly lied about the crimes of his government.

The story of Rwanda offers crushing proof that unity on the Council is no safeguard against cravenness. Unlike the Srebrenica report, which was commissioned by Annan and prepared by U.N. investigators, the Rwanda report was the work of an independent panel. And while it identified the overriding source of the U.N.'s failure as "a lack of resources and a lack of will" coming from the member states, the Rwanda report named names, and it found that the actions—and, more important, the inactions—of the Secretariat and of Annan's peacekeeping department had, at crucial junctures, facilitated the indifference of the Council and of the member states in general.

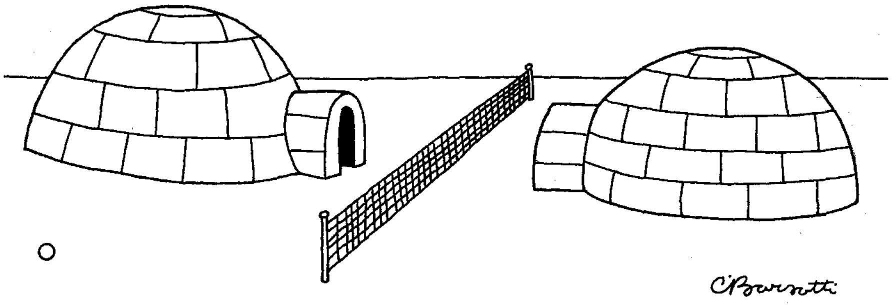
In 1998, the year before the report was released, Annan had visited Rwanda, and addressed the parliament. His audience was composed almost entirely of people who had been targeted for death. They applauded heartily when a government minister introduced him with a lengthy dressing-down. Annan tried to shrug this off. "The guest is always the prisoner of the host," he remarked, and then read his speech. "We must and we do acknowledge that the world failed Rwanda at that time of evil," he said. "The world must deeply repent this failure." But he drew the fury of his listeners when he went on to remind them, in scolding terms, that Rwanda's horror "came from within," and that Rwandans had to get their own house in order. A presidential spokesman denounced him as "arrogant," and top members of the country's post-genocide government boycotted a state dinner in his honor.

It did not help Annan's case that in unscripted remarks during the same trip he dismissed questions about the way he and his deputies at peacekeeping headquarters had downplayed an astonishingly precise warning about an impending extermination campaign—and plans to kill peacekeepers at the outset—sent to them by the U.N. force commander in Rwanda three months before the genocide began. "This is an old story which is being rehashed," he said. He also made the astonishing declaration that he felt no need to apologize personally in Rwanda, because, he said, "I have no regrets." But a year later, after the report took him to task for failing to brief the Secretary-General and the Security Council about the force commander's warning, and described his failure to follow up on the information as "incomprehensible," he said: "All of us must bitterly regret that we did not do more to prevent it. On behalf of the United Nations, I



"There will come a day when you no longer dot your 'i's with little hearts."

acknowledge this failure and express my deep remorse." His response was still carefully impersonal.



"Serve again—I wasn't ready."

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Annan's habit of speaking in the name of the U.N. when he is criticized, and of casting the collective burden of the organization's failures on the shoulders of the world at large, stands in stark contrast to his willingness to take credit when there's praise to be had. It is a deeply ingrained reflex among U.N. officials to blame the member states for the organization's failures, just as the member states blame the U.N. for theirs. Invariably, there are well-founded grievances on both sides of this seesaw of complaint, but they cannot properly be judged by the same standards.

Michael Barnett, a political scientist who served at the American mission to the U.N. during the Rwandan catastrophe, and who has written a book called "Eyewitness to a Genocide," put the problem precisely. "To be cynical, I expect very little of member states," Barnett told me. "I don't necessarily expect the United States or France to rush into every killing field. That's not how they understand their purpose. But I do expect U.N. officials to act in a way that reflects an idea of the greater moral burden of the international community. They escaped scrutiny for years, because it was thought, Hey, these are U.N. officials—why wouldn't they do their very best? Everybody bought the line that they did everything they could. And they bought it themselves. There's lots of blame to go around, but I worry that their failure to really account for how they conducted themselves means that they haven't internalized it."

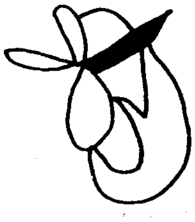
Given Annan's sphinx-like demeanor, it is difficult to tell what he has internalized. "I've never seen him flustered by professional setbacks," Shashi Tharoor told me, with admiration. "I remember at one point we were talking about something we'd been attacked for in Peacekeeping—I can't even remember what it was—and Mr. Annan said, 'Children only throw stones at trees that bear fruit.' It's a lovely line because it means that we're being criticized because we're doing something." Tharoor described Annan's decision to accept and publish the Rwanda report as an act of "courage," which is an opinion widely shared in the Secretariat. When I mentioned this to Sir Brian Urquhart, he said, "Well, maybe it was courageous, but it was also an extremely shrewd move." After all, in quite literally bringing the skeletons out of the closet, the report created the impression that the U.N. had nothing to hide.

A number of Annan's closest associates told me that they believed their boss was treated unfairly in the Rwanda report, because nothing he could have done in the months before the genocide would have made the member states a jot more willing to act when the killing began. This amounts to saying that the genocide was inevitable, and that the peacekeeping mission was useless from the outset. Annan himself said much the same thing when we talked on the evening before he left Sarajevo. In his view, whether the member states knew in advance that a genocide was being planned is immaterial. "I say, when they knew, what did they do?" he told me. "They went to Rwanda, picked up their nationals, and left." By then, however, all hell had broken loose. On the first day of the massacres, ten U.N. blue-helmets were killed, just as Annan had been warned; and, as Annan never tires of saying, there is a world of difference between preventive peacekeeping in a permissive environment and attempted peace-enforcement in the teeth of a full-blown conflagration. Even if Annan's decision to keep his force commander's warnings to himself did no measurable harm—and that is a big, and unprovable, if—the fact remains that not doing wrong is a far cry from doing the right thing. The Security Council's pusillanimity in the face of the slaughter is not in dispute, but what are we to make of Annan's certainty that it would have been pointless to raise the alarm months earlier? How can he know when he didn't even try?

"Maybe we were overly cautious," he said.

Annan's Nobel Peace Prize shocked many of those who remembered the dead in Rwanda and Srebrenica. Yet, as an institutional man, it is not his soul but the soul of the U.N., if one can speak of such a thing, that concerns Annan, and it is in this capacity that he was awarded his share of the Nobel—not for ending or preventing wars but, as the citation said, for being "preeminent in bringing new life to the Organization." This revitalization is largely a consequence of getting Washington to pay its dues, and of the reorganization of the U.N. bureaucracy. But, beyond staving off bankruptcy and stagnation, Annan's larger mission of reform has been to salvage the U.N. from demoralization and marginalization by reversing the legacy of his peacekeeping years. To that end, his agenda has been propelled, where it might have been expected to be dragged down, by his intimate experience of past failures.

According to Richard Holbrooke, Annan got his job because of his willingness, in the summer of 1995, to look beyond the narrow habits of conventional peacekeeping. In August of that year, in the wake of the Srebrenica massacre and of a mortar attack on civilians in an outdoor market in Sarajevo, Annan agreed to NATO's aerial-bombing campaign, which finally drove the Serbs to the negotiating table at Dayton. Until then, NATO airpower had been hamstrung by what was known as a “dual key” arrangement with the U.N., whereby both the Secretary-General and the NATO command had to approve any air strikes, and Boutros-Ghali had vetoed all but the most limited pinprick bombing, for fear of appearing to take sides. But when Boutros-Ghali was travelling, Annan was left in charge of the U.N. key. “When Kofi turned it,” Holbrooke told me, “he became Secretary-General in waiting.”



“I think we cannot live through some of the things that we lived through in the nineties without being affected, without being changed,” Annan said to me in Sarajevo. He was staying at the Holiday Inn, where a decade earlier, at the start of the war, the U.N. had set up its first offices just one floor away from the headquarters of Radovan Karadzic. Through the open window of Annan’s suite, the sound of church bells mixed with the crackling wail of an evening call to prayer from a mosque. “I must say, to come back to Sarajevo today and see how they have rebuilt the city and to see people in the streets, when it used to be empty when you drove in from the airport—buildings without roofs, burned down, charred . . .” He trailed off. “You ask yourself,” he said, “How can human beings be so wicked and brutal? Where is our conscience? Where’s our humanity? How can this happen? And where was the rest of the world? Couldn’t we have done more? Did we do enough? We were here, but was it enough?” The only possible answer was no. But Annan was more interested in the question: Why not? And to that his answer was, as always: The member states didn’t want to.

During the Rwandan genocide, Annan had set off a brief flap among African diplomats when he suggested to *Le Monde* that the reason African governments weren’t contributing troops to peacekeeping was that they “probably need their armies to intimidate their own populations.” During our talk in Sarajevo he reminded me that, in establishing the Srebrenica “safe area,” the U.N. had originally asked for nearly thirty-five thousand peacekeepers to maintain it but was able to muster fewer than eight thousand from member states. At the same time, he said, the mandate kept shifting, and donor governments kept dithering about their commitments to the mission. Faced with such “dishonest” maneuvers, he said, “The U.N. gets set up and then it’s blamed. And also you relieve the conscience of people, thinking, We’ve done something, we’ve sent in the U.N., even if it’s a man and a half.” Under the circumstances, he told me, “We should tell them, ‘We can’t do this.’ We should give them the honest assessment of what we need. The decision is theirs.”

For Annan, the chief lesson of the past decade is that the U.N. must say no to impossible missions and insufficiently supported mandates. “Peacekeepers must never again be deployed into an environment in which there is no cease-fire or peace agreement,” he said, in the conclusion of his report on Srebrenica. “If the necessary resources are *not* provided—and the necessary political, military and moral judgments are not made—the job simply cannot be done.” Of course, crises like Bosnia and Rwanda will continue to arise, and over the years Annan has argued that sovereignty must not be allowed to serve as a shield when a government turns against its civilians. In such cases, he supports “humanitarian intervention”—military action to protect endangered people. Annan has even suggested that preëmptive military action may be justified to avert the threat of a massive slaughter or a genocide. (“Oh dear,” Colin Powell said, chuckling, when I mentioned this to him. “Then why do we get beat up?”)

As long ago as 1994, while the killing was still in full swing in Rwanda, Annan said that “if there is going to be another enforcement mission . . . it’s likely to be the Desert Storm model—where the Security Council would authorize a group of member states to take all necessary means to correct or redress a situation.” That is precisely the model that has been in play since he became Secretary-General. Annan was unhappy when NATO states, faced with the threat of a Russian veto, bypassed the Security Council to intervene in Kosovo, but after the fighting the Council gave what amounted to retroactive approval to the action by placing the territory under U.N. administration. In East Timor, the Australians led a regional coalition that brought an end to the killings, pillage, and arson of Indonesian soldiers and militiamen run amok, and a U.N. administration then presided over the newborn country’s transition to self-rule. In Afghanistan, the Council authorized the force led by the United States that drove the Taliban and Al Qaeda from power. And in early February the Council dispatched French and West African troops to attempt to enforce a tenuous peace treaty in the Ivory Coast.

Annan has been supportive of each of these interventions. But the reliance on ad-hoc coalitions of national armies to take on the missions that the U.N. is incapable of managing leaves the organization more dependent than ever on the will of its member states. In each of the most recent cases, the primary military force in the campaign has come from countries with strong historical or strategic interests in the region. For places that lack such an appeal, there is no new model, and that means that much of Africa, in particular, is more orphaned than ever. For the past three years, Annan has been unable to raise a force of even seven thousand troops—the number that failed to hold Srebrenica—to beef up the U.N.’s minuscule peacekeeping mission in Congo, a country the size of Western Europe, where it is estimated that two to three million people have died since 1998 as a result of civil war and foreign occupation.

Annan’s overriding objective in reconceiving peacekeeping strategy was, as he said, to protect the U.N. from getting set up and blamed, and in this he has been remarkably successful. Since he took office, there have been no more false promises of protection made under the U.N. flag, no further infamies in the field, no more sagas of recrimination between the Secretariat and the member states. The record is clean, and its cleanliness has done much to restore trust in the U.N., and to bolster Annan’s stature as a reformer and as a guardian of world order. Yet, as the case of Congo makes plain, the greater security of the U.N. does not necessarily translate into greater security for endangered peoples. It is estimated that more people have been killed in the fighting in Congo each month than have died in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the past two and a half years. Since the beginning of this year, tens of thousands of Congolese civilians have been displaced from their homes, and U.N. investigators have recently confirmed that rebel forces in the Ituri forests of the northeastern Congo have been massacring, raping, and even eating the Pygmies who have dwelt there for centuries.

When I asked Annan how he thought the U.N. would respond if a situation like Rwanda in 1994 were to develop suddenly in Africa today, he said, "I'm not sure. I'm really not sure. I'm really not sure that it would shape up differently. I'm really not sure that the international community and countries with capacity would be ready to go. I was asked this by a young Rwandan woman when I gave a lecture at the Kennedy School, and I said, 'I wish I could give you the assurance, but I can't.' Honestly, I couldn't, and I can't today. But it doesn't mean I should give up."

The paradox of Annan's tenure as Secretary-General is that he has strengthened the U.N. by diminishing its pretensions and ambitions to exercise the sort of power that sovereign states exercise. Indeed, he has succeeded in making a virtue of the organization's practical weakness. The U.N. no longer does what it cannot do properly, so it no longer invites expectations that it cannot fulfill, but it has grown in stature as a hub of diplomacy, where the most important matters—war and peace—are debated, negotiated, and at times, at least temporarily, resolved. What the U.N. offers its members—its primary product, as it were—is legitimacy. Annan's political credo is pure multilateralism. The Security Council's decree is international law, and anyone who acts outside it is an outlaw in the international community. That is what he means by legitimacy: the U.N. seal of approval.

Annan's position is unambiguous, or so it seemed, anyway, until George Bush laid down his challenge in the General Assembly in September. Bush wanted the U.N.'s approval, but he did not ask for legitimacy. He believed that he already had it, because Saddam had flouted so many U.N. resolutions, and he was inviting the U.N. to legitimate itself. Bush purported to be suing for peace, and for a time it was not only imprudent but impossible to say that an American invasion of Iraq was inevitable. After all, by submitting to the diplomatic process, Bush opened himself to the remote possibility that Saddam would comply so fully with weapons inspections as to moot the prospect of war. But there was little doubt as to what Bush expected once the inspectors got to work: either Saddam would obstruct them or they would find his weapons, and one way or the other, in short order, the Iraqis would be shown to be in "material breach" of the Council's resolutions. Even Annan, who made no secret of his hope that the resumption of inspections might avert war, expressed little confidence in Iraqi cooperation. "It's difficult to say what Saddam thinks would be a positive outcome," he said over breakfast in Washington a few days after Resolution 1441 was passed. "The only guide I could have is they keep saying they have no weapons of mass destruction, which nobody believes."

The debate over the passage and implementation of Resolution 1441 in the following months was as much about the fate of the U.N. as an arbiter of legitimacy as about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. "If the U.S. walks away from the table and acts unilaterally, there's a very good risk that the U.S. won't walk back, and that's a big challenge to the Security Council," a European diplomat said. "So it's a game of chicken. The U.N.'s all about consensus, and if the U.S. comes and says, 'Our way or no way,' it's very un-

Victoria Roberts

"You take small bites out of life, Howard, and chew thoroughly."

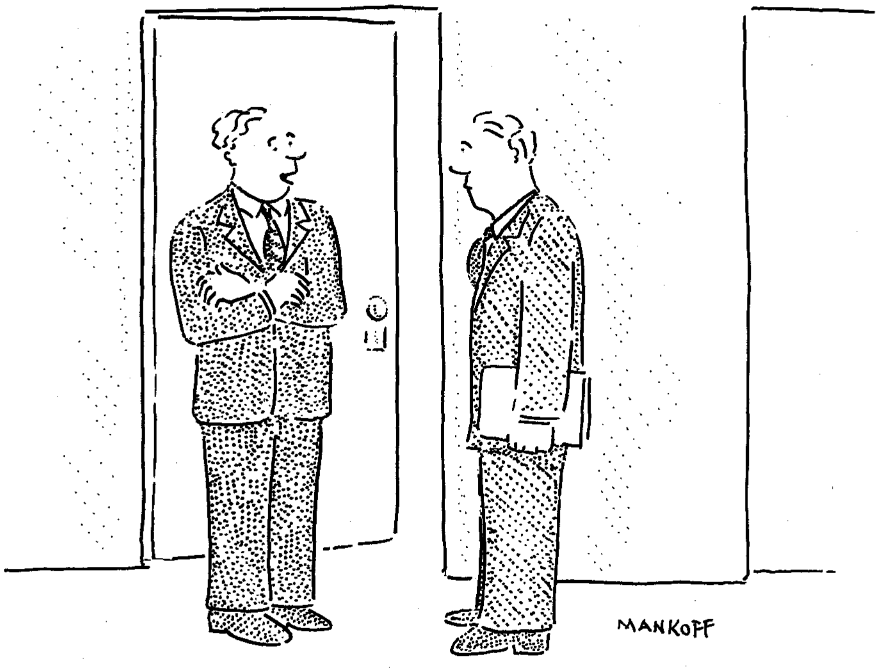
pleasant." Considering the stakes for the U.N., he said, "This is a conflict that could turn out to be about the way the world is ordered—by shared rules or by a return to a world of great powers."

On his way back to New York from the Balkans, just before Thanksgiving, Annan stopped in Paris for a lunch of red mullet, squab, cheeses, and terrific twelve-year-old wines, with President Jacques Chirac, at the Élysée Palace. They finished off with a mandarin ice, and descended for a brief "press encounter" in a baroque ballroom, ornately pilastered and gilded, with lots of cherubs in the ceilings. Annan said that full Iraqi compliance with Resolution 1441 was "the only way to avoid a military conflict in the region," and Chirac rumbled that "all outcomes are possible" if the Iraqis failed to meet their obligations. "For the Europeans, building on the lessons of two world wars, sovereignty is in a sense shared. We are building our European destiny together," the French Ambassador, Jean-David Levitte, told me in Paris. "A euro is shared sovereignty. Would you consider sharing the dollar with the Mexican and the Canadian? Give them a say in the future of the dollar? Of course not. Sovereignty for you is paramount. For us it's a value which must be shared in the world of today and even more tomorrow. So for us the U.N. is not a problem."

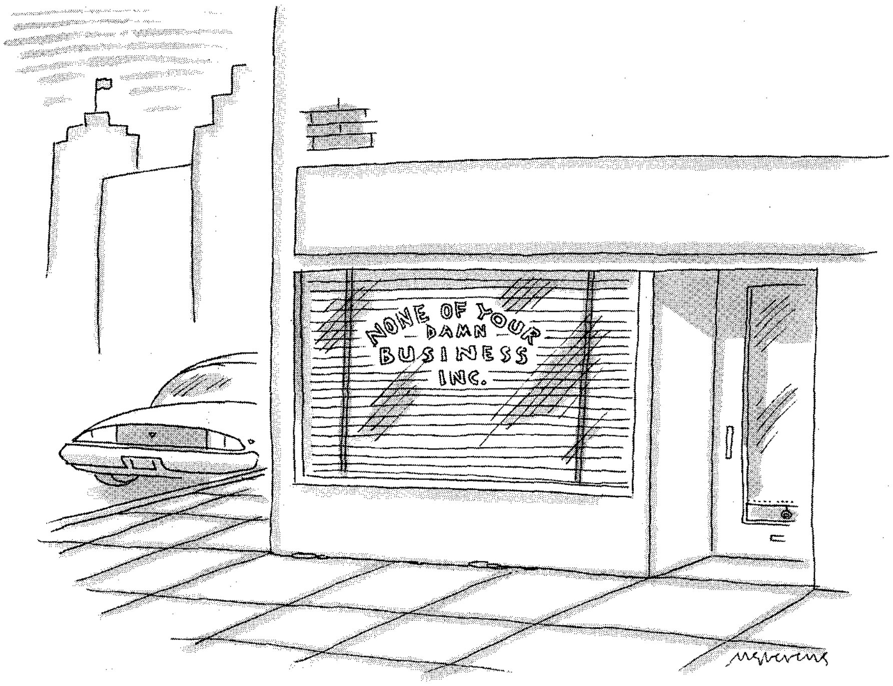
Leaving aside Chirac's historical softness on Saddam, and French oil interests, it was somewhat implausible for a diplomat from one of the most fiercely nationalistic and independent-minded countries in the world to suggest that sovereignty is a matter of indifference. Levitte got at the deeper truth about his government's position, it seemed, when he said, "We need the U.S. in the U.N., fully participating. Otherwise, everybody loses." For, just as the Security Council can serve as a check on America's freedom to project its power abroad, France's permanent seat on the Council amplifies its importance on the international stage. When the U.N. was established, France was a global power by virtue of its empire, with colonies in Indochina, the South Pacific, and across north and west Africa. Now, shorn of its overseas dominions, France would be just another midsized European power (albeit with nuclear bombs) if it weren't for the extraordinary leverage of its veto on the Council. Bush's professed willingness to go it alone in Iraq posed a threat to the French, but they welcomed the debate as an opportunity to exercise some influence. "We were so happy when we heard Bush's speech on the twelfth of September," Levitte said, and he added, "So now what we hope for is that President Bush will act according to what was agreed. The rule of the game is very clear."

In Washington's view, too, the rules were clear: comply or die. But the Bush Administration's eagerness for U.N. collaboration in its campaign against Saddam sent a message that counteracted its high-noon rhetoric and endowed the Council's multilateralist mission with more immediate relevance than it has had since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Never, in the intervening years, had the U.N. been more important as a forum for international debate; and never had it been more imperilled by the prospect of being left on the margins of the action. Annan played his part in the drama by preserving a tone of perfect impartiality, stumping simultaneously for peace and for the unity of the Council. But with each passing month, as Saddam remained defiant and Bush kept massing forces around Iraq, the two principles appeared increasingly incompatible, and Annan began speaking of a grim day of reckoning ahead for the multilateralist order.

The Bush Administration's patience for diplomacy seemed unlikely to endure much beyond the onset of the crippling heat of the Arabian summer in the latter half of March, and as Washington intensified its pressure on the Council to gird for war, the French mounted a diplomatic counter-offensive. It was no longer just the fate of the U.N. that was at stake in the transatlantic rupture. The broader multilateralist order of the Western world, represented by NATO and the European Union, appeared to be coming apart at the seams. On February 14th, when Hans Blix reported that Iraq was still not fully and actively coöperating but might yet come around, the French foreign minister's impassioned plea for more time drew applause from spectators in the Council gallery. Rather than hardening the international rift between hawks and doves, however, this moment of triumph for France gave way almost immediately to a cooling-off period. Washington, still in lockstep with London, delayed demanding a timetable for the diplomatic endgame or a new resolution that would authorize the use of



"Oh, can't complain, but I do."


NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS INC.

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force, and France, feeling that it had been paid attention to—that it had demonstrated the limits of Yankee power and proven the world to be multipolar after all—joined with the European Union in thanking the Americans for exerting the military pressure on Iraq that made inspections possible, and reaffirming that all options were open, even war. But, speaking for himself, Chirac made it clear that a Council veto was also possible.

Annan still spoke of a peaceful way out of the crisis, as long as everyone involved stuck to the technical and legal terms of the Council's resolutions. The onus was on Baghdad, of course, but while travelling in Europe late in February Annan urged the European Union and NATO allies to "lower the decibels, avoid the tendency to turn on each other, and focus on Iraq." He spoke of the E.U. and NATO not as independent centers of global power but almost as if they were subsidiaries of the U.N. whose tussles were getting in the way of the broader international cause. "If they had accepted the primacy of the Security Council and said, 'The Council is dealing with it, and we don't have to get involved here,' they wouldn't have had all these divisions," he told me. He used what were, for him, particularly sharp words about Washington and London's lofty justifications for an assault on Baghdad. "Quite frankly, some of the recent arguments about wars of liberation, and of moral law . . . these are issues that the Council has never discussed. For the Council, the issue is disarmament, and all these other issues muddy the waters, and the public gets confused, and the Security Council and the U.N. members get confused."

In the absence of any new discoveries of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the Bush Administration has groped for an alternative casus belli: a link between Baghdad and Al Qaeda, Saddam's cruelty to his own people, democratization of the Middle East. But, like any legal system, the Security Council cannot sustain such extraneous arguments and must focus on the case before it, and despite Annan's past talk of supporting "humanitarian intervention" to bring dangerous tyrants to heel, he has carefully avoided making such a case against Saddam. Still, as Hans Blix made clear on Valentine's Day, even by the loosest interpretation of Resolution 1441, Iraq remains in contempt of international law; and, by all accounts, Saddam's defiance was strengthened by the antiwar speeches that followed Blix's report. This leaves the Security Council in the same bind Bush placed it in in September, when he confronted it with its own logic and proposed that for the first time in history the world should go to war in defense of U.N. resolutions. For now, a U.N. diplomat observed, "The United States is having a problem with the Council similar to the one Blix contends he's having with the Iraqis. They're getting coöperation on process but not on substance. Ultimately, process will not be enough, not for Blix and not for the United States, and that will be the U.N.'s moment of truth."

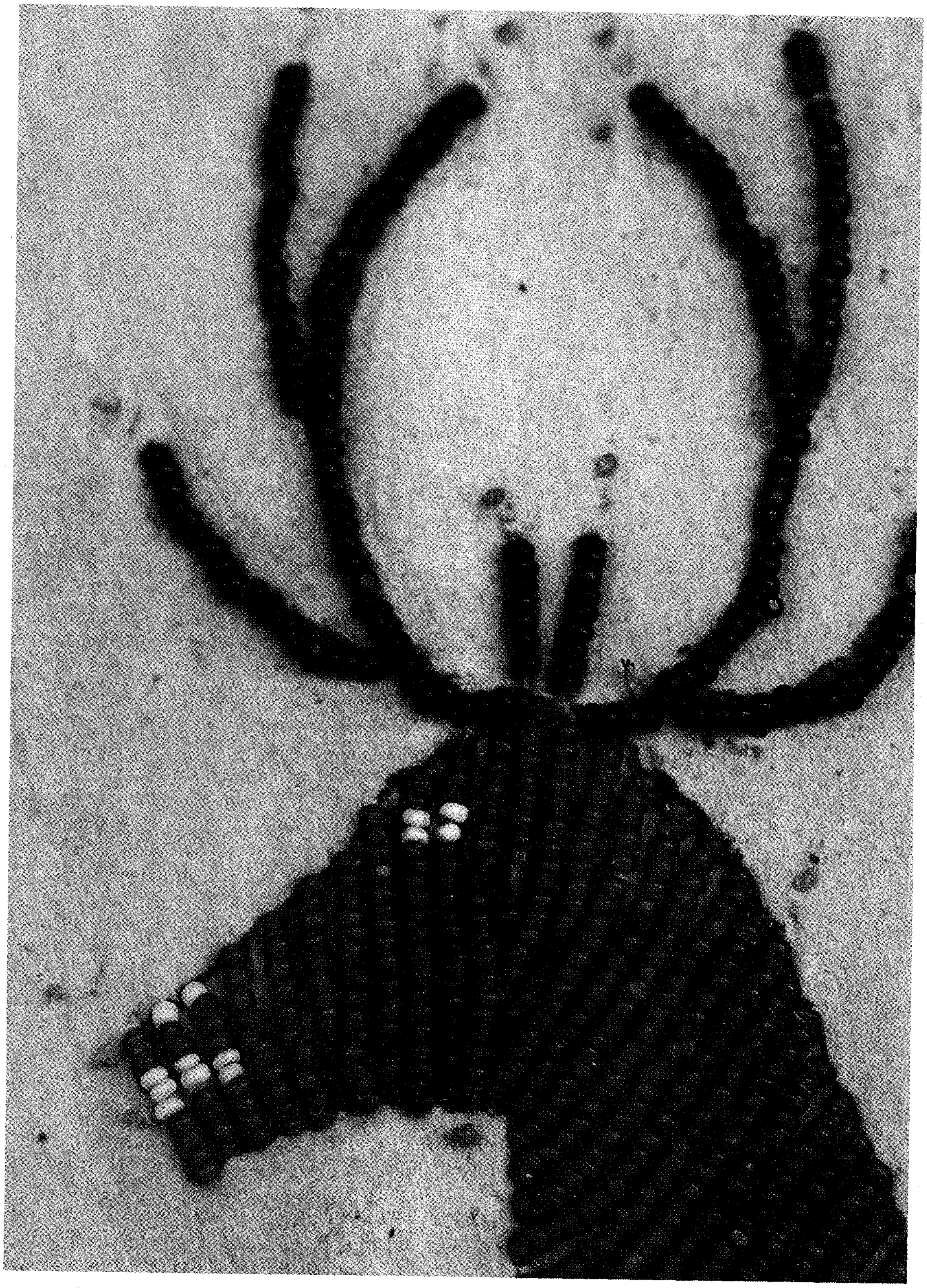
Despite the threats of irrelevance, the bitter fraying of old alliances, and the possibility that instead of preventing war the Security Council will legitimate a campaign that few of its members believe to be desirable or just, the Iraq crisis has been a tremendous boon to the U.N. Whether out of hope or desperation, public opinion is far better disposed to entrusting the decision on whether to go to war against Saddam to the Security Council than to the White House. "In the past, one would have expected only politicians and diplomats to refer to the Security Council, or say we have to go to the Security Council," Annan said to me. "But now, incredibly, you see the peoples of the world, in whose name the Charter was written, saying, 'Don't ignore the Security Council.' And this is not just outside the United States but even in the U.S."

Annan wants the Council to take a unified position—and if that means war, so be it. If peace cannot be preserved, then Annan will stand for international order. In the logic of the United Nations, every war should be, in effect, a world war—a collective quest for collective security—and as one of Annan's aides put it to me, "No one sees a way out." Another member of the Secretariat put it a bit less gloomily. "I suspect we may all look back on this period as a time when the world sought to show it has an influence over what the U.S. is ultimately going to do in Iraq, when in reality that influence is marginal. That said, the importance of the U.N. for future crises should not be underestimated." After all, he said, "Next time the world needs to come together to address a global threat—even if we can't agree on *how* to do it—this is where it will happen. Where else?" ♦

FICTION

THE PAINTED DRUM

BY LOUISE ERDRICH



I was called upon to handle the estate of John Jewett Tatro just after his Presbyterian funeral. I went to make my appraisal of the contents of the house on an overcast morning in spring. The sky was a threatful gray, yet the willows blazed in tender bud, and drifts of wild-apple blossoms floated in the cavern pines. I kept the windows slightly open as I drove the back roads to the Tatro house, and breathed in the watery air. The Tatros had always been too cheap to keep up their road, and the final quarter mile was partly washed out, the gnarled bedrock exposed. Overgrown swamps and ponds lapped close to either side. As I bounced along, the frogs quieted momentarily, so that I seemed to be continuously pushing against a wall of sound. Once I stopped, the frogs began trilling again. Making my way up the flagstone walkway to where the Tatros' grandniece waited, I stopped a moment, caught in the vehemence. Spring in New Hampshire can be disorienting—virginal and loudly sexual all at once.

The Tatro house was not grand anymore. The original nineteenth-century homestead had been renovated and enlarged so many times that its style was obscured. Here a cornice, there a ledge. The building was now a great clapboard mishmash, with aluminum-clad storm windows bolted over the old rippled glass and a screen porch tacked darkly across its front. The siding was painted the brown-red color of old blood. The over-all appearance of the house was ramshackle and sad, but the woman who greeted me was cheerful enough, and the interior was comfortable, though dim. We began my first, casual viewing. The rooms were filled with an odor I have grown used to in my work. It is an indefinable scent, really, made up of mothballs and citrus oil, of dust and cracked leather. The smell of old things. I noted that an inordinate number of closets seemed to have been added to the house during some period of expansion, even on the ground floor.

The niece, whose name was Sarah, was a pleasant, square-jawed woman, with light-brown hair and blue eyes. She was in her mid-thirties, perhaps ten years younger than I am, and the sort of woman who volunteers to supervise recess or construct grade-school art projects. I knew the type. I had attempted to *be* the type. So had my mother. But our fascination with the stuff of life, or, more precisely, with the afterlife of stuff, had always set us apart. Mother had started the business, and we had run it jointly now for nearly two decades. We are fair, discreet, honest, and knowledgeable. We are well known in our part of New Hampshire, and well respected, I think. There is a certain advantage to our gender. More often than not, it is the women of the family who get stuck dealing with the physical estate, the possessions, and we are also women. We understand what it is like to face a mountain of petty decisions when in grief. As I sat down with Sarah, to formalize things over a cup of coffee, I felt the comfortable and immediate sense of solidarity that I often feel with other women at times like this—there is sympathy, of course, but also some relief. Finally, to get on with things! There is even some excitement at the idea of the task ahead. Cleaning out a house can numb you to the bone, but there are always discoveries along the way. Some are valuable—an original Shaker table under a coat of milk paint, a fabulous porcelain or saccharine but valuable old Hummels amid chipped salt-and-pepper shakers. Once, an old bucket forgotten in a pantry corner turned out to be a hand-painted Leder, worth thousands. First editions turn up, too: a signed Mark Twain, a Wharton, maybe a pristine Salinger—you never know what will surface from even the most unpromising pile. And then some discoveries are revelatory—diaries, packets of love letters, a case of antique pornography featuring trained ponies, certificates listing surprising causes of death or unknown births. The contents of a house can trigger all sorts of revisions to a family history.

Behind my eagerness to take on the Tatro estate, there was also a thread of connection that reached back several generations. My mother and I specialize in Native American antiquities. In "The History of Stiles and Stokes," a book published on subscription by our local historical society, there is an entire chapter devoted to the Tatro family, and within that chapter a paragraph about the great-grandfather of the most recently deceased Tatro. Jewett Parker Tatro had been an Indian agent on the Ojibwa reservation in North Dakota, where my own grandmother was born and where she lived until the age of six, at which time she was taken East and enrolled at the Carlisle Indian School, in Pennsylvania. There she had learned to sew intricately, to add and subtract, to do laundry, to scrub a floor clean, to read, write, and recite Bible passages, Shakespeare sonnets, Keats odes, and the Declaration of Independence. The Carlisle school was also where she fell in love.

My grandmother had stayed in the East with the young teacher she married shortly after graduating, though she returned for visits and bore my mother on her own allotment land. But we have never really been Easterners. The connection between Tatro and the reservation was of interest to us because it wasn't uncommon for Indian agents back then to amass extensive collections of artifacts, and of course we had always wondered whether the Tatro house held such a trove. Although we'd had little indication while the last two Tatro brothers were alive (they died within two months of each other), and at first I saw nothing that would lead me to think that those closets held anything more exotic than magazines and clothing and phonograph records, there had been rumors. And to our knowledge a large-scale Tatro collection had never been donated to any local, state, or college museum. There were those many closets and the thick walls of the downstairs rooms. Also, there was the Tatros' character—there was certainly that—to consider.

They were sharp, they were shrewd, they were flinty, calm cheaters and secret hoarders. They haunted tag sales. Bought food in bulk. Hitchhiked when gas was expensive, though they were not poor. Saved the rubber bands off broccoli and bananas, when they bought such luxuries. They boiled the sap from their trees and stole the corn from their neighbors' fields. They picked fiddleheads, tore fruit off stunted trees, shot and roasted raccoons. Each fall they bought and salted down a pig, devouring it from snout to hock over the course of a year. To my mind, the Tatros were the sort of cheap old Yankee bachelors who would keep a valuable collection of artifacts just because it had never occurred to them to part with anything. They would simply have hung on to their stuff—moldering, mothballed, packed away with cedar blocks—until Judgment Day.

Curiously, perhaps, the house I live in with my mother is not cluttered. It's not that our vocation has made us snob-

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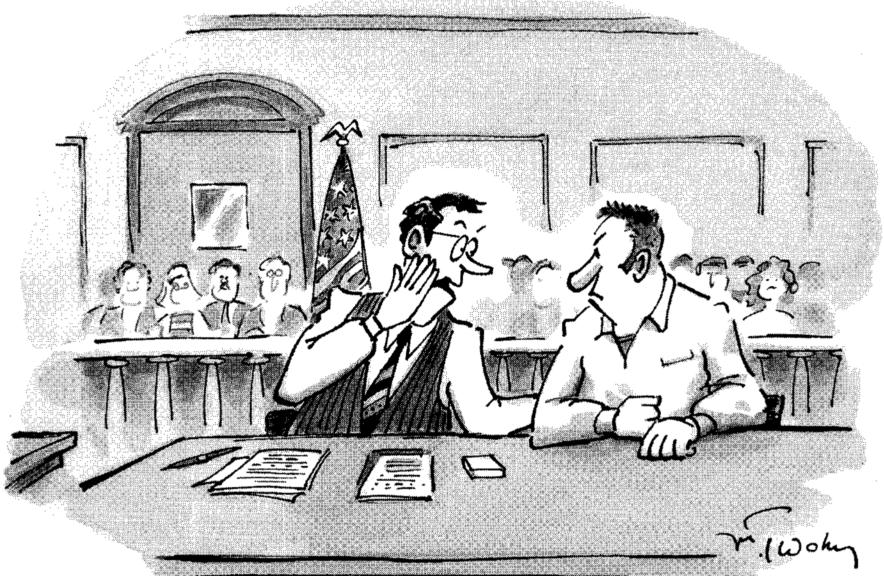


"My incompetence will become the basis of your appeal."

bish. Rather, it is the constant reminder of our own mortality that reins us in. To strive to own anything of extraordinary value generally strikes us as absurd, given our biodegradability. Still, there are a few objects we've found irresistible. Their nature probably reveals that we are more captive to our background than we admit: a lustrous double-throated Maria Martinez wedding vase; an Ojibwa cradleboard, with a wrap of intricately beaded velvet; three very fine Navajo rugs; a bandolier bag that was probably carried by the last Ojibwa war leader, Bugonageshig himself; a few seed pots; several shaved-quill boxes; and some heavy old turquoise that must be continually polished. Yes, we'd like to leave our path to Heaven clear, to travel a spare, true road. Yet we're human enough.

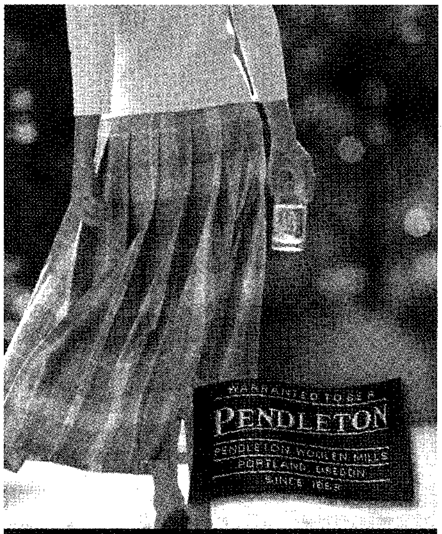
Sarah Tatro did not intend to let the house and its contents trap her. Over the cup of coffee—one of those thick diner-style white mugs, surely swiped from a local café by one of the uncles—she told me that she was anxious to clear the place out and put it on the market. I found her forthrightness appealing and, at the same time, the idea that the Tatro house would pass from Tatro ownership after nearly two centuries infected me with a faint melancholy. It is unusual for one place to remain so long in the same family—I was, surprisingly, tempted to try to dissuade her from breaking with the past and carrying on with, of all things, her own life. I controlled myself. I took out my notebook and began to make a rough list of the contents of the house. Later, I would be joined by two assistants, but I prefer to work alone at first, as does my mother. I like to get a feel for the things in a house, a sense of the outlook of the person who, though safely in the next world, still lingers in the arrangement and treatment of his goods. I like to make peace with the dead.

I asked Sarah if her great-uncle had had any particular interest or collection that might require special handling or appraisal. "Oh, I don't know, there's just so much of everything." She waved her hands. "So many old sets of dishes. And he owned a number of guns. Some of those are old. And then the closets on the ground floor go way back behind the walls. They're stuffed. So, really, it's anybody's guess."

I was on my own, and soon I was immersed in the pleasures of my job. The sorrows of strangers are part of my business, and, were I to examine my motives for choosing this line of work, I might find that from their losses I extract some bit of comfort—as though my constant proximity to death protected me and those I love. The furniture in the first two rooms on the ground floor was in adequate repair and quite good, though there were no "finds." Predictably, the Tatros hadn't been bibliophiles, nor was there much in the way of decorative touches—lamps, vases, figurines. Yet the walls were hung with six nice paintings by local artists, and there was one oil sketch, a sort of pre-painting drawing, by Maxfield Parrish. That discovery alone would have made my day at any other time. In this case, it also indicated the Tatro tendency to hold on to things, as Parrish was well known and the work could easily have been sold. I tried not to get my hopes up, but when I opened the door to the first closet my fingers were clumsy with excitement. Quickly, I went through what I could see. The usual boxes of magazines. Piles of curtains and old and faded linen. A great many boots of all styles, reaching back for decades. Mothballed coats made of everything from wool to skunk fur. The closet went on and on, but soon enough I decided to leave it to my assistants. The next closet was stuffed with records. Mostly 78 r.p.m., swing or big band. I was beginning to worry that the rumors were just that, when, upon embarking on a wide bank of shelves built into a wall, I found the first indication of, it seems curious to say, life.

Some estates come to life and others don't. Some holdings have little personality, others much. There is a moment I think of still, one I nearly missed. Years ago, I opened a small wooden chest containing what appeared to be handkerchiefs wrapped in tissue paper, just handkerchiefs, bearing the owner's initials: L.M.B. I was about to empty the box and scatter its contents among the linens, when I noticed a label. Pinned to each cotton, lawn, lace-trimmed, or embroidered handkerchief, I realized, was a carefully cut label with a date inked in ladylike script. A name, or names, were written. And occasions: "Teddy's Christening." "Venetta and John Howard's Wedding." "Teddy's Funeral." "Brother Adamantine's Wake." "First Opera, 'La Traviata.' " "Broken Arm." And far down at the bottom, perhaps the handkerchief that started the collection, a child's small square of fabric clumsily labelled "My Mother's Funeral." I remember sitting with the handkerchiefs of L.M.B. as the rest of the work of pricing and sorting swirled around me. Here was a box containing a woman's lifetime of tears. I passed through several stages of emotion. The first was elation at the novelty of such an idea, and I felt the urge to show the box to my assistants. Next, I was swept through with irritation. I almost never think of non-Indians as "white"; after all, my own skin is pale. But I experienced a sudden jolt of prejudice that surprised me. *Just like a white lady—so stingy with her tears she kept them*, I thought. Then I recovered myself and sat a little longer, holding the box, which was very light, old varnished pine, and turning over one handkerchief after another. "Theodor's Precious Birth." "Aunt Lilac's Deathbed Supper." What was a deathbed supper? "Cousin Franklin's Wedding to Mildred Vost." More funerals. The other workers left to tackle the next room, and it was then, sitting with L.M.B.'s sorrows and joys, that my own eyes filled with tears. There weren't many. I am not the crying sort anymore. But when I did feel that swell of sadness I reached immediately for one of the handkerchiefs, dabbed my eyes, and added my own tears to the box. Then I closed the box. I knew that what had happened was exactly right. "Tears Shed for L.M.B.," I might have written on a scrap of paper. I'd have to buy the box myself now, but that seemed the proper close to the collection. I'd heard that the owner had become a ferocious bore in her old age, critical, churchy, and prone to making complaint calls to the parents of young boys who cut across her front lawn or spoiled her tulips. But that's what I mean by coming to life.

The estate of John Jewett Tatro came into a similar focus when I made the acquaintance of a doll with a face of fawnskin and eyes of jet. I knew that the doll was something special the moment I put my hands on it. It was wrapped in faded red trade cloth and placed inside a shoebox. The shoebox had been mistakenly stored on a shelf of shoes, and when I opened it I caught an unmissable whiff of smoked hide—a smell that could only have accumulated, molecule by molecule, over the course of years. As I removed the doll from its wrapping, the fugitive taste of smoke vanished and there was the doll herself, exquisite. The perfectly cured hide that was her skin had somehow re-



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SOPHOCLEAN

First he was shivering on the shore in skins
Or hunkering behind shell-middens in a cave.
Then he took up oars, put tackle on a mast,
And steered himself by the stars through gales.

Once upon a time from the womb of earth
The gods were born and he bowed down
To worship them. Then he walked tall
From temple to agora, talking against himself.

The wind is no more swift or mysterious
Than his mind and words; he has mastered thinking,
Roofed his house against hail and rain,
And worked out laws for living together.

Homemaker, thought-taker, measure of all things,
He survives every danger except death
And will yield to nothing else. Nothing
Else, good or evil, is beyond him.

When truth is the treadle of his loom
And justice the shuttle, all due honor
Will come his way. But let him once
Overbear or overstep

What the city allows, treat law
As something he can decide for himself—
Then let this marvel of the world remember:
When he comes begging we will turn our backs.

—*Seamus Heaney*

tained its softness, though from the faintly smudged darknesses on her arms and skirt I saw that she had been loved as a toy. Her red quill lips were stitched into a calm, amused smile, and her bead eyes were set at a lively angle. Her coarse black hair had been plucked from a horse's mane and divided into braids. Her dress was also made of tanned hide, decorated with bits of shell and the old antique beads called "greasy yellow" and "ruby-red whiteheart" and "German blue." Her waist was belted with a woven sash. Attached to it, she wore a scabbard that secured a tiny skinning knife. Her moccasins were sewn with flowers, and a ring of trade silver made a bracelet on her arm. From her pierced fawnskin ears dangled miniature earbobs, hawk's bells so unusually small that they could have hung from the throats of warblers. She carried a thimble-size basket woven so cleverly that I laughed in pleasure. I brought the doll out at once, and showed her to Sarah.

"Oh, there she is!" She took the doll from its wrapping and handled it with familiar tenderness, smoothing the coarse hair down and caressing the slender horsehair brows embroidered above the glittering eyes. "My uncles used to let me play with her if I was very good."

"*She's* very good, you know. Valuable, I mean. We should have a museum curator look at her."

"Yeah?" Sarah was surprised, but not particularly pleased. I think she felt the same way I did about the doll. It was personal—the delight of owning the doll had nothing to do with its worth.

"Were there other things—American Indian, I mean—of that era?" I asked. "Did your uncles keep them all together somewhere? In a cabinet? Trunks?"

“Oh, God, yes, I’d forgotten all about it. One of the Tatros way back lived with the Indians,” she said. “There was a lot of old beadwork and stuff. Come on upstairs, I’ll show you.”

On the way up the stairs, I tried to breathe slowly. There was an attic room, of course—a long, unfinished tar-papered hall lined with simple board shelves and stuffed with old suitcases. Most of the artifacts were kept in these suitcases, Sarah told me. There were also some larger things, wrapped in old bedspreads and horse blankets. We unveiled these at once—a cradleboard not as good as mine, large birch-bark winnowing baskets, a beadworked footstool, a drum. The suitcases held some precious examples of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century bead-and-cloth appliqué work. There were moccasins, leggings, beaded ceremonial breech clouts, a vest, and two bandolier bags (in extraordinary condition, worth a great deal). There were also a number of lesser items—small purses of the sort once sold to tourists, a band for a headdress from which all the feathers had been removed, tobacco pouches, woven carrying straps and reed mats. We laid things out, unwrapped, on the tops of suitcases, draped off the edges of drawers and shelves, but stopped eventually. The collection went on and on.

“Congratulations,” I said, and there must have been some degree of feeling in my voice. Sarah Tatro looked startled.

“Congratulations for what?”

“You can probably retire,” I said. “Or at least take a long vacation. No more early-morning wakeup calls.”

“You think all this is valuable?”

“Very.”

Sarah dropped to a trunk and put her head in her hands. “You mean they were sitting on this all along?”

I said nothing, and after a time she shook her head and laughed shortly, without humor. “They were so cheap they ate oatmeal for dinner. And they spread Crisco on their bread instead of butter. The taxes on this place had gone sky-high, of course, and they wanted to keep it. So they lived on nothing. But in the end . . .” Her voice lifted. “I have to say I think they enjoyed their stinginess.” And then she laughed with more ease. “They probably even enjoyed what they had here. You can see they went through these things. Checked them for mildew or bugs, I guess, rewrapped them. Set mousetraps. Look.” She showed me the date on a newspaper that had been used to cushion a little sweet-grass basket. “Last year’s.”

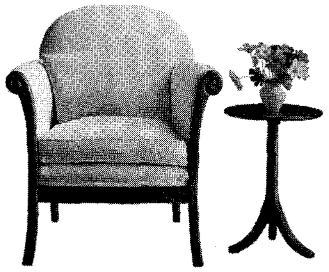
“That’s fortunate,” I said. “The acid in the newspaper could have ruined that basket.” I moved closer to look at the little coiled and sewn basket, and that is when I stepped near the drum.

I’m not a sentimental person. How could I be? I have seen the most intimate objects proceed to other hands, indifferent to the love once bestowed on them. Some people believe that things absorb their owners’ essence. I stay clear of that. And yet when I stepped near the drum I swear it sounded. One deep, low, resonant note. I stopped dead, staring at the drum. I heard it, I know I heard it, and yet Sarah Tatro did not.

“I’m getting out of here,” she said. “Too dusty. I’ll be back later on this afternoon. I’ve got some errands in town.”

And so I was left with Tatro’s loot. I continued to stare at the drum, or what I could see, since it was mostly swaddled in a faded quilt. I’m not subject to imaginative fits, and I don’t just hear things. There had to be an explanation. Something shifting to strike the skin. A change in air pressure. The quilt wasn’t anything special, a simple collection of squares, machine-stitched and yarn-tied. I went over to the drum and pulled the fabric entirely away. The light in the attic came from two bare bulbs with pull chains, which cast harsh shadows. The head of the drum glared out, huge, three feet across at least. The moose that was skinned to make it must have been a giant. Yet there was something delicate about the drum, for it was intricately decorated, with a beaded belt and skirt, hung with tassels of pulled red yarn and sewn tightly all around with small tin cones, or tinklers. Four broad tabs were spaced equally around the top. Into their indigo tongues, four crosses were set, woven with brass beads. On the face of the drum, at the very center, a small bird was painted, in lighter blue. That was all. But the bird detail, the red flowered skirts, the tinklers, combined with the size of the drum, gave it an unusual sense of both power and sweetness.

I drew a folding chair close, sat, and jotted down the details. My hand dragged across the page. This was the sort of find that should have thrilled me, but I was



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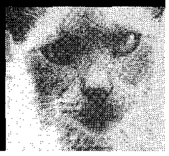

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"The antibiotic era made us arrogantly believe microbes were old hat, no longer threatening, easily controlled. Then along comes HIV, Ebola, Mad Cow Disease... Scientists have identified less than 2% of the microbial populations on Earth. How in the world could we be so arrogant, as a species, to believe that the other, unknown 98% were insignificant and harmless?"

Juan **Enriquez**
"What I'm excited about is that we are beginning to understand enough to be able to directly and deliberately guide the evolution of most species... including ourselves. And that is also what worries me."

Wade **Davis**
"My goal is to identify and celebrate cultures that are so inherently wondrous that those who learn of them will come to understand that the world in which we live is just one model of reality. These other cultures are not failed attempts at modernity, they are unique manifestations of the human spirit."

Jacqueline **Novogratz**
"While the world is in a precarious state, we have never had more opportunity to effect real change, to solve real problems. We don't need people watching from the sidelines, critics without action, especially not now. Instead, we need people with imagination, resources and the will to get involved. That's how change starts. If not us, who?"

...plus
Freeman **Dyson**, Jane **Goodall**, Scott **Cook**, Paul **Saffo**, Brian **Eno**, Herbie **Hancock**, Bill **Gross**, Jared **Diamond**, Dan **Dennett**, Steve **Pinker** and 50 more.

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uneasy, anxious. I looked around. I set my hand on the drum and then I felt, pulling through me like a nerve, a clear conviction. It was visceral. Not a thought but an instinct. I covered the drum again and went out to make sure that Sarah had gone. When I saw that the garage was empty and I was alone, I propped open the back door and went straight to the attic. I bundled the quilt more tightly around the drum, and then I carried it out of the house, slid it into the trunk of my car, and hid it by pulling down the theft-deterring blind I always use when parking at big auctions.

I worked the rest of the afternoon without thinking about what I'd done. When my thoughts flickered toward the drum, I veered away from any further examination. What I'd just done, or was about to do, was probably a felony and could ruin our business. The ease with which I had done it bewildered me. For a person who had not stolen so much as a candy bar all her life to walk coolly out of a client's house with such a valuable object might signal insanity. The beginning of a nervous breakdown. But I didn't feel that way. I felt quite lucid. And I wondered whether others who committed irrational and criminal acts felt this calm acceptance of a previously unknown part of themselves.

Dusk was forming, blue and cold, by the time I arrived home. I left the drum in the car, wrapped in the quilt, underneath its stretched plastic curtain. I didn't want it in the house yet. I had to think—not about whether what I'd done was right. By then I had decided that I wouldn't have done it unless it was, on some level, *right*. And yet the explanation of this rightness swirled beyond my reach. My real concerns were whether I could keep the drum hidden and whether I'd get caught. I was pretty sure that Sarah Tatro hadn't noticed the drum; in fact, she'd seemed indifferent to all her uncle's objects, save the doll she had played with as a child. I was also fairly certain that she was the only person who would have any knowledge of her uncle's collection. And even she had forgotten that it existed. I'd had to take the drum that afternoon, if I was to take it at all. I knew that, once I had catalogued the objects and had them appraised, the drum would have priced itself out of the reach of all but the wealthiest collectors, or a museum. Yet I didn't want the drum. What would I do with such a thing? Where would I keep it? No, I hadn't taken the drum for myself. I reassured myself of this as I sat down to dinner with my mother.

"You have an odd look on your face," she said. "So, how was it?"

I took the salad bowl from her hands and began forking leaves onto my plate.

"Well, it was all there," I told her.

"Oh!" She put her fork down.

I'd taken a mouthful of spinach, but suddenly I felt too tired to even chew. I slumped down in my chair. Then I threw my head back, stretched my arms. "I've been crouched over the notebook all afternoon. It's a real haul. Old—I mean old *old*—Tatro walked away with everything. Dolls, beadwork, cradleboards. You name it."

"So he got away with the good stuff. He had an eye."

We sat there with our food between us. My mother's hair, sleek and pulled back in a knot, was very white. She bore me late in age, when she had given up on getting pregnant. I was a gift. It's nice to be told, all your life, that you are a gift to someone. We were very happy right then, although I don't know exactly why. Perhaps it was just because our secret expectations had been met.

"There was a drum," I said to her.

She pushed her plate away and leaned toward me, her elbows on the table. Her eyes were narrow and slightly upturned at the corners. The irises, dark brown, had the milky-blue ring of age, but her gaze was still sharp. She was waiting for me to describe the drum.

"One of the big drums," I said. Her fingers flickered on the table.

"Was it dressed?"

"What?"

"Decorated."

"Yes."

"How?"

I told her about the crosses.

"Not crosses, not Christian. Those are stars. Was it painted?"

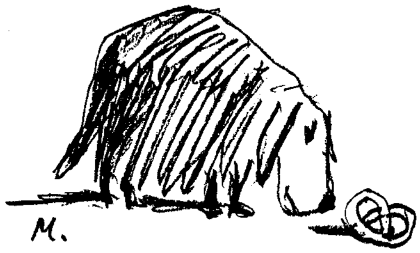
"There was a bird. A little blue bird."

She closed her eyes, pressed two fingers to the space between her eyebrows. I watched her carefully, because she does this when she is trying to form a thought. Finally, she spoke. She talked a long time, and I can only sum up what she said: The drum is the universe. The people who take their place at each side represent the spirits who sit at the four directions. A painted drum, especially, is considered a living thing and must be fed as the spirits are fed—with tobacco and a glass of water set nearby, sometimes a plate of food. A drum is never to be placed on the ground, or left alone, and it is always to be covered with a blanket or quilt. Drums are known to cure and known to kill. They become one with their keeper. They are made for serious reasons by people who dream the details of their construction. No two are alike, but every drum is related to every other drum. They speak to one another and they give their songs to humans. I should be careful around the drum, she said. She was bothered by its presence in the collection.

"It's more alive than a set of human bones," she finished.

After she went to bed, I cleared off a low table in the corner of my bedroom and then I brought the drum inside and balanced it carefully on the table. I shoved two chairs up against each side. Whenever I touched the drum, even to set it down, it made a sound. A high, hollow note. Or a low, uncertain tone, like a question. A slight tap on its edge set up reverberations. It was exquisitely sensitive for so powerful an instrument, and I wondered what it sounded like when struck with force, by many and in unison. I turned off the light and got into bed. I leave my windows open just a crack at night, even in winter. The darkness seethed with spring music, and from time to time, deep in the woods, a barred owl screamed like a woman in pain. I thought I might have dreams—as pragmatic as I consider myself, it had been a long, strange day. The realization that I'd stolen the drum outright surfaced and sank in my consciousness. No matter how justified by history I felt, I promised myself that I would not evade my guilt or rationalize my conduct.

Which was not the same as even considering that I might do the proper thing and return the drum to Sarah Tatro.



All I have is other people's lives. What I do belongs to them and to my mother—her business, her legacy, her blood. Even the box of tears in my closet belongs to another woman, L.M.B. But now I've stolen the drum. And it seems to me, as I lie in the dark of my room, that my instinctive theft signifies something so essential that it might be called survival. I have stepped out of rules and laws and am breathing thin, new air. My theft is but the first of many I'll accomplish—though not of objects. There are other things I need and will have to have, other things I'll take. Thoughts, plans, private rages, and even joys, now secret to myself.

I am usually a sound sleeper, but tonight, all night, it seems, I am listening. Thinking. So many ideas float in half-formed, and then veer off.

Our old house ticks. Not regularly, like a clock, but softly all through itself as the slats in the walls change temperature or the plaster tightens or the earth shifts underneath the granite-slab foundation. From time to time, the little sounds that the house makes reverberate inside the drum. My breath does, too. I hear a rising, then a falling. In and out. A greatness, a lightness. I grow heavier, and then so inert that my body seems without life. Between breaths, I lose feeling. And then my chest fills, a resurrection.

There is another thing that this house does in the deep of night. I have heard it before and now I wait for it to happen. The house releases the day's footsteps. All day we press down minutely on the wide old floorboards, moving about on regular errands, from room to room. It takes hours for the boards to readjust, to squeak back up the nails, for the old fibres of the pinewood to recover their give. As they do so, they reproduce the sound of the footsteps. In the night our maze of pathways is audibly retraced. I am used to it, as is Mother, but sometimes a wakeful guest is frightened. I can understand this. For now, as I rise and stand in half-darkness in the doorway of my bedroom, I hear the distinct creak of footsteps proceeding toward me, then past me, over to my bed. I feel the breath of my own passage, as though my dead self and my living self had briefly met in that doorway to sleep. ♦

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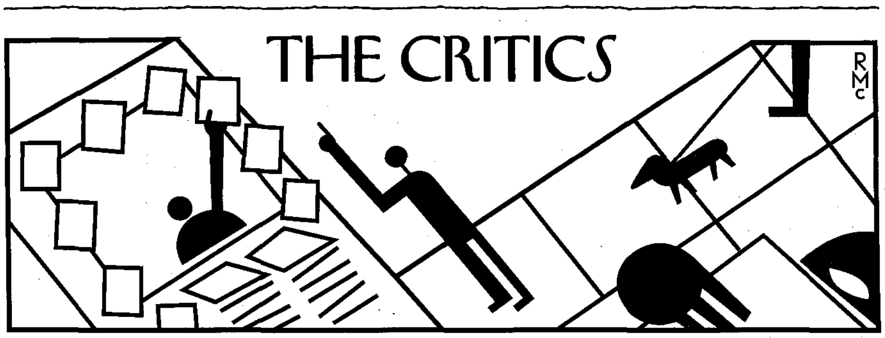


THE CRITICS

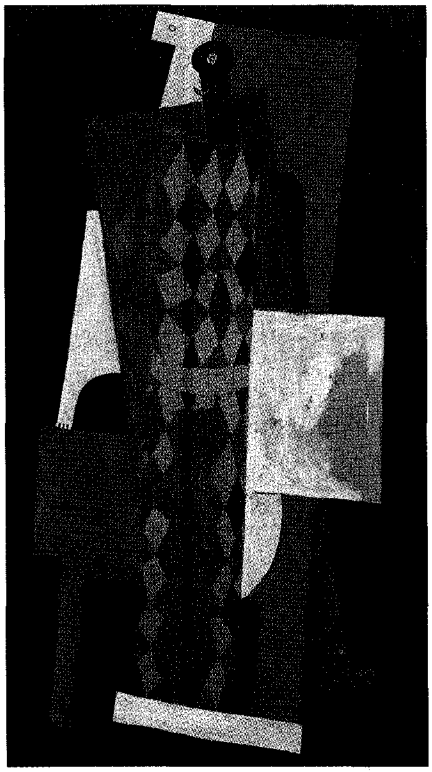
THE ART WORLD

TWIN PEAKS

Matisse meets Picasso.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"Matisse Picasso," which has come to the Museum of Modern Art's temporary home, in Queens, after triumphant appearances in Paris and London, is a marvellous exhibition with a frail hook. With sixty-seven mostly top-drawer paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Picasso and sixty-six by Matisse, the show hardly needs a pretext, but it has one: a running dialogue of mutual attractions and abrasions between the twin godheads of modern painting. "This exhibition tells one of the most compelling and rewarding stories in the entire history of art," the catalogue introduction by the art historian John Golding begins. I'll buy that. But to extract the story—an elliptical tale, full of hints, puzzles, and fine discriminations—while looking at so much stupendous art is like trying to check the oil in a speeding truck. The show's insiderish self-regard, radiant with the leisurely delectations of an eminent curatorial team, including the museum's former chief curator of painting and sculpture Kirk Varnedoe, is unlikely to charm ordinary viewers, who, clutching their twenty-dollar, timed tickets, must elbow through packed rooms for disjointed encounters with the works. But the installation, by Varnedoe and the museum's curator-at-large John Elderfield, is crisp and considerately spacious, and to miss this event would be a shame. It will be a permanent reference point in the challenge of deciding what survives of the rich, estranged legacy of twentieth-century art in our drastically altered times.

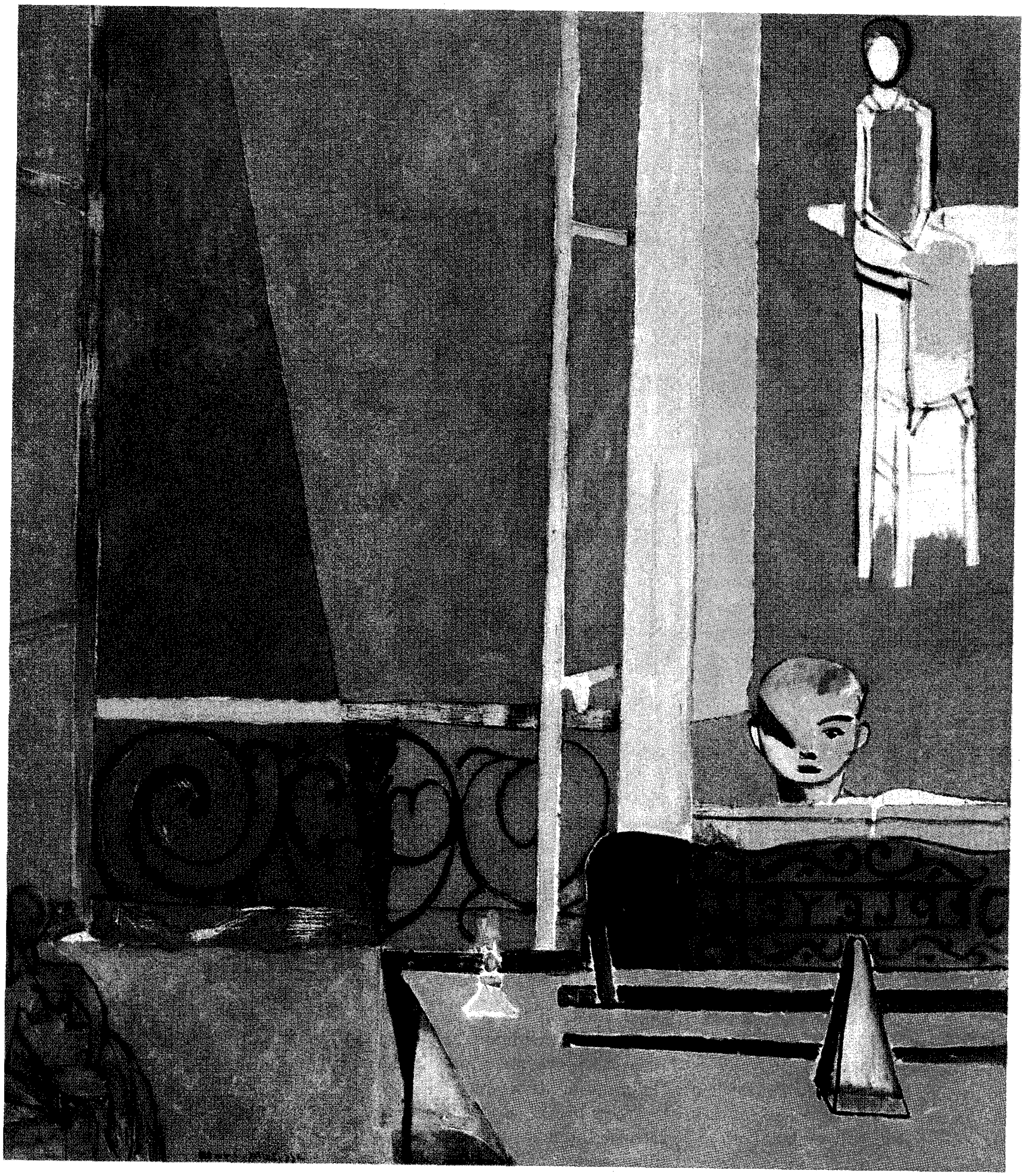


Picasso's "Harlequin" (above) emboldened Matisse's "The Piano Lesson" (opposite).

At the heart of the show's appeal is a cultural come-on that has not changed: stardust. To have been the best at something in a sufficiently consequential way still earns historical figures—Albert Einstein, T. S. Eliot, Muhammad Ali—near-religious prestige. In the case of Picasso and Matisse, there's the added fascination of two giants whose respective claims to the Best Painter award involve sharply disparate talents, temperaments, and philosophies. Both of them had the same ambition at the same time and in the same place: to make art that would exploit the novelty and uncover the continuity of a world under convulsive stress. Neither artist, while rolling over lesser rivals, could eclipse the other, as each freely admitted. Plainly, they made each other better, but in ways that are far more difficult to evaluate than the show's confident, side-by-side presentation of their works suggests. In fact, their give-and-take is hardly unusual among artistic contemporaries. (It yielded nothing as significant as the Cubism that developed out of Picasso's symbiotic relationship with Braque.) Art history is Hobbesian; all ambitious artists compete with all other artists, living and dead. This showdown of a show is an occasionally bristling, more often absent-minded standoff—no Ali vs. Frazier, though similar in its even match of antithetical styles.

Matisse was a thirty-one-year-old paterfamilias and a presence in the Parisian art world when he began showing in 1901, the year that Picasso, a twenty-year-old tyro from Barcelona, arrived in town. Although they were immediately aware of each other, they did not meet until 1905 or early 1906, when they were brought together by the champion salonistes Gertrude and Leo Stein. (These events are laid out in a finely detailed chronology in this show's catalogue.) Alfred H. Barr, the founding director of MOMA, once decided, on the basis of Matisse's early "Blue Nude," of 1901, that the older artist inspired the younger's Blue Period. Evidently, this wasn't so. The use of a dominant, pure color—especially blue—was in the air then. A magical colorist, Matisse rose to fame as the *chef d'école* of the new century's first major art movement, Fauvism. At the same time, he was adapting structural principles from Cézanne, notably the strategy of arranging all the parts of a subject frontally, in splayed, shallow pictorial spaces. Violent color and crackling composition fused in Matisse's revolutionary masterpiece "Joy of Life" (1905-06). (It could not be borrowed from the Barnes Foundation, outside Philadelphia, and is sorely missed.) Picasso, in tandem with Matisse's erstwhile Fauve comrade

PABLO PICASSO, "HARLEQUIN" (1915)/MOMA/ART RESOURCE; OPPOSITE: HENRI MATISSE, "THE PIANO LESSON" (1916)/MOMA/ART RESOURCE



Braque, would build on Cézanne more radically, with the stroke-by-stroke faceting of Cubism. (Matisse called Cézanne "the master for all of us"; Picasso said that he was "like the father of us all.") Picasso's breakthrough painting of 1907, "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," which, in Queens, hangs next to Matisse's magnificent but hardly competitive "Bathers with a Turtle" (1908), might be considered his lean-and-mean riposte to "Joy of Life"—Arcadia as a whorehouse.

Matisse coined the name Cubism as a derisive joke. He initially hated the aggressively drab new style, which incidentally torpedoed his leadership of the avant-garde. In 1908, according to Picasso's mistress Fernande Olivier, Matisse "lost his temper and talked of getting even with Picasso, of making him beg for mercy." Picasso, for his part, took offense at the arbitrariness of Matisse's decorative distortions. He said of Matisse's amazing "Blue Nude: Memory of Biskra" (1907), "If he wants to make a woman, let him make a woman. If he wants to make a design, let him make a design. This is between the two." Picasso thereby put his finger on what was disturbing about the picture while begrudging its success: in "Biskra," the tension between the subject (the nude model) and formal invention (her serpentine contour) is both flaunted and transcended, producing a new kind of image that celebrates the painter's freedom to do as he likes, purely for the sake of pleasure. Picasso could never be so insouciantly free. His way with form had to be in strict agreement with his attitude toward the subject and with the aesthetic task at hand.

Both artists understood how opposed their world views were. At a dinner in Picasso's studio in 1907, they exchanged two paintings, neither of which owed anything to the other. MOMA shows them side by side: a very tough, ugly, proto-Cubist still-life by Picasso, and a cartoonishly simplified, sweet portrait of Matisse's daughter Marguerite. Several of Picasso's katzenjammer friends—including the poets Guillaume Apollinaire, Max Jacob, and André Salmon—made fun of the socially uneasy bourgeois Matisse, and, on one occasion, made "Portrait of Marguerite" a target for rubber-tipped arrows. " 'A hit! One in the eye for Marguerite!' " Salmon wrote in a colorful memoir. Picasso, according to Salmon, said nothing.

With or without the masters' approval, their fans battled by proxy. "The feeling between the Picassoites and the Matisseites became bitter," Gertrude Stein later recalled. In 1911, an anonymous reviewer in Paris reported that the Cubists "are reacting, they say, against the 'colored debauchery' of Matisse." (Ah, when taste was militant!) Through it all, the two artists often paid gracious homage to each other. In 1913, when their styles were most polarized, they got along particularly well, as both reported in letters to Stein. Picasso wrote, "We take horseback rides with Matisse through the forest of Clamart." Matisse told Stein, "Picasso is a cavalier. We are cavaliers together. This astonishes a lot of people." Matisse later told a friend that he had run into Max Jacob and said to him, "If I weren't doing what I am doing, I'd like to paint like Picasso." Whereupon Jacob said, "Well, that's very funny! Do you know that Picasso made the same remark to me about you?" The cavalier analogy is apt. The two men were courtly peers, profoundly understanding of each other while ready to come to swords' points where honor was concerned. What is moving about their rivalry is that honor, for each, centered not on their egos but in their ideas of what was worth doing in art and how it ought to be done. Their brushes were their weapons.

At MOMA, the most striking moment of influence occurs in 1916. Dazzled by Picasso's large, heraldic "Harlequin" (1915), which transposes the dynamics of Cubist paper collage into paint, Matisse took up the potential for expanding scale with broad, flat blocks of color in such paintings as "The Piano Lesson"—my favorite work in the show, with its chordlike planes of green, orange, pink, and gray and its racy accents in black and white. Each figurative element—boy, window, window grille, music rack, sculpture, candle, metronome, sketchy woman on a stool—exudes a hieratic but easy, breathing presence. I can think of nothing else in art that is at once so solemnly august and so disarmingly everyday. The picture's audacious style comes with the comforting assurance that modernity only enhances the joys of ordinary life. Produced when Europe was engulfed in war, the painting, with its beautiful elegiac gray, doesn't ignore the tragedy, but simply proposes gravely that music and art maintain their imperturbable truth in all times.

Two things may be said about "The Piano Lesson" in the context of the show. First, its formal power seems inconceivable without the benefit of Picasso's provocative innovations in "Harlequin." If we measure artistic greatness by formal inventiveness, Picasso is the more formidable genius, running ahead of Matisse at every juncture after 1907. But the poetry of "The Piano Lesson"—a sort of brilliant passivity, surrendering to an ineffable logic of paint and color—falls entirely outside Picasso's range. Picasso could not let anything in his work speak, let alone sing, for itself. His continual struggle with color is like his compulsive imbroglios with women, stemming from a need to control what is intrinsically uncontrollable. Picasso's will, in the form of peremptory drawing, declares itself everywhere in his art. By contrast, Matisse's line is yielding; it seems to accept the mysterious need of shapes and colors to seek their proper place and proportion. His contours are like the borders of wetness left by waves on a beach. The one major work in which Matisse tries for something like Picasso's highhandedness—the Cubistic pastiche "The Moroccans" (1915-16)—is a mess. At MOMA, it hangs next to Picasso's staunch "Three Musicians" (1921), which scolds it like a drill sergeant. But it's a tribute to Matisse's freedom that he risked failure in his efforts to extend his scope. Picasso, except during spells in his later years, when he lived like a pampered sultan on the Riviera, could not permit himself that luxury.

The two artists are just so overwhelmingly different from each other. Each was most himself in the nineteen-twenties, when Picasso became a demiurgic Surrealist, re-creating reality to mirror his raging desires, and Matisse dawdled in Nice hotel rooms, dressing and undressing pretty models as harem girls. Both were style mechanics, shaping the look and outlook of modern culture. Perhaps only in the Renaissance, with the likes of Leonardo and Raphael, did other pairs of artists imprint history with such clashing sensibilities. The aesthetic friction between Picasso and Matisse goes to the root of conflicts that have been fundamental to Western culture since the time of the Greeks: line versus color, thought versus feeling, knowledge versus experience. The great service of "Matisse Picasso" is to hone a sense of those antinomies in action, making us reflect on how we think about art. One is compelled to take sides, though the preference may be a close call. For the record, during the first of several tours of the show I decided that it was no contest: Picasso ruled. A couple of hours and viewings later, I had swung the other way. At a party, it often happens that the person you find most glamorous is not the one you think of when it's time to go home. ♦

From the Times.

Dr. Salick donated, along with his wife, Gloria, $4.5 million to Queens College for the center.

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BOOKS

BORROWED CULTURE

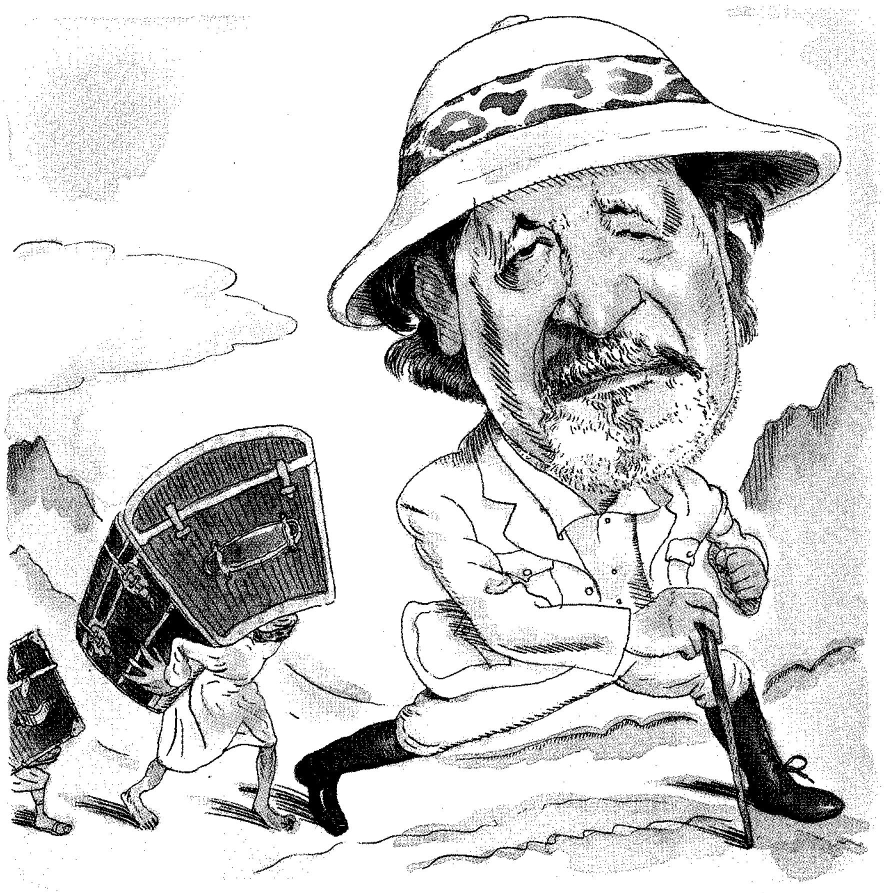
V. S. Naipaul out-Englishes the English.

BY HILTON ALS

New York City. The nineteen-nineties. One fall afternoon, a black writer renowned for his examination of colonialism leaves a restaurant in lower Manhattan in the company of two friends, one white, one black. The man is in a hurry to get uptown, where his family is waiting for him. He tries to flag down a passing cab. It doesn't stop. A second cab pulls up. The driver appears to be a dark-skinned Indian. He looks at the writer, and at the other black man, standing next to him; their white friend, behind them, is not visible from the taxi. As the man reaches for the door handle, the driver steps on the accelerator and speeds off. The man's face goes slack with disbelief. His hand is still clutched around the missing door handle. He says, "But he looks like me!"

Arwacas, Trinidad. Early twentieth century. A black woman enters a general store owned by a family of Indian immigrants. The woman asks for "flesh-coloured stockings, which were then enjoying some vogue in rural Trinidad." The shopkeeper's daughter takes down a box and holds up "a pair of black cotton stockings," writes V. S. Naipaul, the creator of this scene, which appears in his 1961 novel, "A House for Mr. Biswas." " 'Eh!' The woman's gasp could be heard throughout the shop. 'You playing with me? How the hell all-you get so fresh and conceited?' She began to curse. '*Playing* with me!' She pulled boxes and bolts of cloth off the counter and hurled them to the floor and every time something crashed she shouted, '*Playing* with me!' "

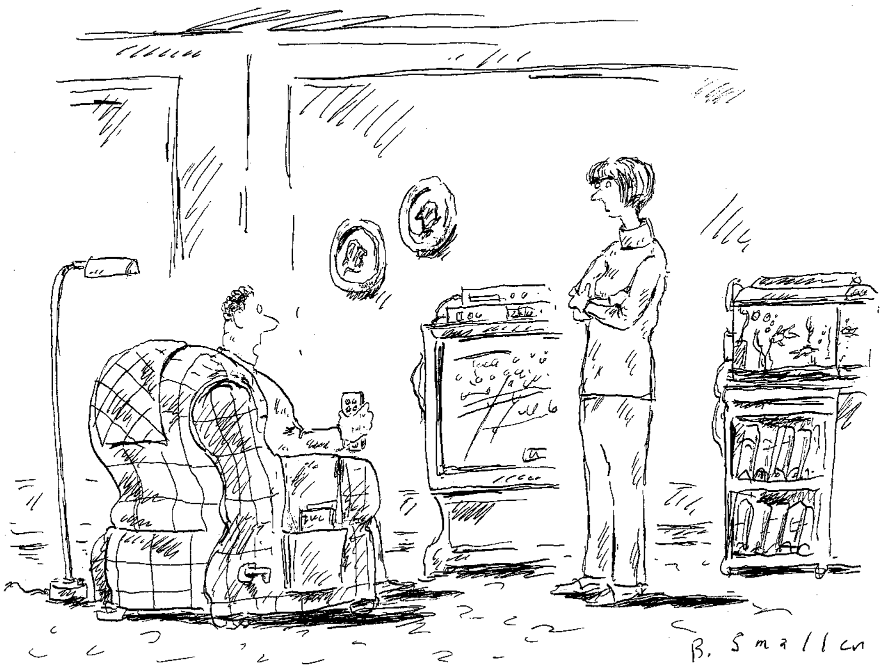
Several decades and more than two thousand miles separate these moments—one real and one invented—and yet their content is similar; each involves an instance of discrimination between two people who are not white, and each reflects a truth about life on the color scale, about how the oppressed appropriate the behavior of the oppressor. "If you're brown, stick around, if you're black, get back, get back, get back," went the old blues song. In order not to be "black," you have to be something else, or at least prove that you're climbing your way out of the heart of your own darkness to something better—a shop, a taxi. And you must lord it over the "ordinary" black who hasn't earned the same exalted sense of himself. That ordinary black may be a man standing on a New York City street, or a woman shopping in pre-"Black Is Beautiful" Trinidad, for whom color is a ball of dirt thrown against the white wall of British standards of beauty.



Naipaul's only models for travel writing were Englishmen such as Orwell and Waugh.

BARRY BLITT

The community of Indians that Naipaul depicts in "A House for Mr. Biswas"—the most fully realized of his thirteen books of fiction—is based on the circles he grew up in: poor Hindus who had immigrated to Trinidad from India in the late nineteenth century. Naipaul's paternal grandfather came to the island in 1880, the child of more or less indentured servants who had been promised a better life by the British government if they abandoned North India for another British outpost. Trinidad, according to the British, needed building up—something the "bush niggers" whom Columbus had dropped off there two centuries earlier seemed not to have managed to do. Naipaul's grandfather became a village pandit—a holy man and a man of learning—but he died young, and whatever prosperity the family had attained was soon lost. Naipaul's great-uncle—his grandfather's brother—had to work in the sugarcane fields for eight cents a day. His aunt was a servant. Her brother, Naipaul's father, Seepersad, was spared, somewhat. Because he showed signs of following in his father's footsteps, he was allowed to finish school, but he still had to work in a shop at night. He married a woman who was relatively well off—she was from a family of landowners—and



"Of course I'm paying attention—I've pressed the mute button."

although he had trouble supporting the family without her help, he managed to have a reasonably successful career as a local journalist.

In "An Area of Darkness" (1964), Naipaul's account of his life in Trinidad and his first journey to India, he writes, "To our condition as Indians in a multiracial society we gave no thought. Criticism from others there was, as I now realize, but it never penetrated the walls of our house, and I cannot as a child remember hearing any discussion about race." He goes on, "I have been rebuked by writers from the West Indies, and notably George Lamming"—a Barbadian novelist and essayist—"for not paying sufficient attention in my books to non-Indian groups. The confrontation of different communities, [Lamming] said, was the fundamental West Indian experience. So indeed it is, and increasingly. But to see the attenuation of the culture of my childhood as the result of a dramatic confrontation of opposed worlds would be to distort the reality. To me the worlds were juxtaposed and mutually exclusive."

Naipaul's disclaimer is disingenuous; it is precisely those opposed worlds—the black and Indian communities living under colonial rule on the island Naipaul has called that "dot" in the world—that he shows so brilliantly in the shop scene in "Mr. Biswas." And his assertion that his relatives never gave any thought to their race or to the race of those around them is hard to believe. It is well documented that the Asian immigrants of Naipaul's grandparents' generation suffered the disdain of black Trinidadians. Many of them then lived out the immigrant's dream and ended up despising the natives they had risen above. Naipaul himself was indoctrinated in bigotry by his father. While he was studying on a scholarship at Oxford, in the early fifties, for instance, he received a letter from his father about two young female cousins who were boarding with the family. "I had never realised, until about three weeks ago, how shockingly 'advanced' these girls have become," Seepersad wrote. He went on:

> These girls have become so ultra-modern that they make no distinction between Negroes, Mussulmans or any other people. Deo says, without the semblance of a blush, there's nothing bad or ugly in a Hindu girl marrying a Negro boy. Her actual words: "What does it matter as long as you can be happy?" . . . A week or so ago Phoolo brought in a young black-as-coal (I assure you I do not exaggerate) dougla [half Indian, half African]. She wanted to know what I thought of her marrying this man. Your Ma and everybody else was at home, around the table. I could not but be cold to the fellow.

Yet Lamming's criticism isn't entirely valid, either: Naipaul *is* fundamentally a West Indian novelist, and the region is the scene of some of his most potent work. It's just that he doesn't make his West Indianness a statement of purpose. His driving impulse as a writer is not the return of the native, revelling in his country's inglorious past. It's the exile of the repressed, of a man who was told by his colonizers, even by his own family, that his West Indianness didn't count: that Indians in the West Indies were superior to their surroundings, more like the British (who, in the imperialist hierarchy, were always the best and the brightest) than their black neighbors. As Lamming points out in his book "The Pleasures of Exile" (1960), "When the [exile's] chosen residence is the country which colonised his own history, then there are certain complications. For each exile has not only got to prove his worth to the other, he has to win the approval of Headquarters, meaning in the case of the West Indian writer, England."

In "The Middle Passage" (1962), Naipaul provides a remarkable analysis of the limitations of the West Indian writer:

> Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands. Here the West Indian writers have failed. Most have so far only reflected and flattered the prejudices of their race or colour groups. Many a writer has displayed a concern, visible perhaps only to the West Indian, to show how removed his group is from blackness, how close to whiteness. . . . To the initiated one whole side of West Indian writing has little to do with literature, and much to do with the race war. . . . Irony and satire, which might help more, are not acceptable; and no writer wishes to let down his group.

While this is interesting and somewhat accurate as literary criticism, it is doubly powerful as autobiography, given Naipaul's own willing "removal" from blackness, his yearning, as a writer from the provinces, to be seen as cosmopolitan. But the authoritative tone is misleading. There is a great deal of ambivalence in Naipaul's attack, and he is clearly talking also about his own difference, his "borrowed culture," which he takes with him everywhere.

Naipaul's need to position himself in a caste system and in a literary tradition—his desire to out-English the English, to be the good son, the good student—is constantly at war with his own nature. Naipaul is a modernist; he sees the world as fractured—humanity in so many shards—and he often mocks the assumption that just because two men are West Indian, adrift in London, they must have something in common. "Sameness" is a fiction that makes for bad fiction. It is one's individual isolation—more than one's race or one's culture—that makes the tale worth telling. Naipaul's novels are as much about his imagination as they are acts of literary criticism levelled at Lamming's claims. To refuse to see him as a modernist, to deny him access to the tradition of Eliot and Camus as well as of Soyinka and Achebe, is to practice a form of literary racism. To ask him, in effect, how he got "so fresh and conceited" is to ignore the ways in which he's playing with *us*.

The most arresting of Naipaul's fictional works after "Mr. Biswas" remain "In a Free State" (1971) and "A Way in the World" (1994). In a sense, they are not completely fictional but constructs of invention and reporting which describe, in pared-down prose, the lives of the displaced, the immigrants who live in dirty rooms in foreign countries, the browns hating the blacks whom they inevitably become involved with because no one else will have them. The prologue of "In a Free State," taken from Naipaul's travel journals, depicts a group of Egyptian Greeks "travelling to Egypt, but Egypt was no longer their home. . . . The invaders had left Egypt; after many humiliations Egypt was free; and these Greeks, the poor ones, who by simple skills had made themselves only just less poor than Egyptians, were the casualties of that freedom." Another casualty of freedom turns up as the narrator of the story "One Out of Many": an Indian manservant whose "sahib" takes him to Washington, the capital of freedom, where he eventually becomes the American ideal of an Indian, by working in a successful Indian restaurant. But it's in "Tell Me Who to Kill," the third piece in "In a Free State," that Naipaul's identification with his narrator's emotions reaches a feverish pitch. The unnamed narrator goes to find his adored younger brother, Dayo, the family's hope, who has left the West Indies to study in England; but when he arrives he discovers that Dayo has collapsed. "This country will kill me," Dayo says. The narrator's love for his brother, whom he works to save, has sexual overtones—he has a wet dream when he and Dayo share a bed-sit—and it is homosexual desire that is so beautifully and terrifyingly rendered in "A Way in the World," stories about the people Naipaul left behind in Trinidad. The most memorable story in the collection is that of Leonard Side, an Indian undertaker who bakes bread, arranges flowers, and gives courses at the Women's Auxiliary Association. Side is a figure familiar from provincial life anywhere—the gay man who does not speak his love but is marked by and ridiculed for it. What makes him particularly heartrending here is the obvious parallel between his profession and Naipaul's. Side's efforts to make his subjects presentable mirror the writer's obsession with control, with presenting the world in an aesthetic way. Yet Side's subjects are literally dead—about to rot—and, no matter what he does, they will not come to life, and the community he serves will always regard him as a creature apart, not because of his race but because of his sexuality, another of Naipaul's metaphors for difference.

Leonard Side and Dayo's brother are portrayed with great gentleness. But Naipaul exercises no such sensitivity when it comes to stories of heterosexuality. He is compulsively fascinated by images of whites or Indians sleeping with blacks, and Seepersad's disgust lurks behind every sentence of his son's awkwardly rendered, often misogynistic sex scenes. In Naipaul's most recent novel, "Half a Life" (2001), the protagonist's father, a Brahman ascetic, aligns himself with a lower-caste woman to get back at his family. Recalling their "courtship," he says:

> There was a girl at the university. . . . She was small and coarse-featured, almost tribal in appearance, noticeably black, with two big top teeth that showed very white. She wore colours that were sometimes very bright and sometimes very muddy, seeming to run into the blackness of her skin. She would have belonged to a backward caste. . . . I was fascinated and repelled by her.

Had Naipaul chosen to conquer this repulsion and explore the tensions within communities defined by religion or race, he could have been a profound social and sexual realist. But he is no sensualist, and his observations of sex, at least of the heterosexual kind, generally have more to do with cruelty and terror than they do with the ways in which people connect. In the novel "Guerrillas" (1975), for instance, Jimmy, the leader of a black revolutionary commune in the Caribbean, has his way with Jane, one of his white supporters:

> She felt the pressure of his hands on her shoulders, and suddenly she was turned over on her belly and he was squatting on her, her hips and legs squeezed between his knees, thighs, and feet. He said, "It's going to be different today, Jane. We're doing it the other way." She made as if to rise, but he held her down between the shoulder blades with his left hand, and opened her up with his right. She began to beat her hands on the bed. As soon as, moving down from the base of her spine he touched her where she was smaller, she cried out, "No!" And when he entered, squatting on her, driving in, his ankles pressed against her hips, she began to wail, a dry, scraping, deliberate sound. He said, as though speaking to a child, "But you're a virgin, Jane. Isn't it a good thing you came to see me today?" She shouted with real pain, "Take it out, take it out." She began to wail again. He said, "A big girl like you, and a virgin, Jane? It's hard. I know it's hard. But you didn't bring your Vaseline, you see."

"Naipaul's repulsion towards Negroes . . . is a physical and historical abhorrence that, like every prejudice, disfigures the observer, not his object," Derek Walcott wrote in a 1987 essay. But what are the roots of this abhorrence? It is not, historically, a mutual one. (W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, argued for Indian-African unification. "The sympathy of Black America must of necessity go out to colored India and colored Egypt," he wrote in 1919, thirteen years before Naipaul was born. "We are all—we the Despised and Oppressed—the 'niggers' of England and America.") But Indian distaste for blacks is widespread. The scholar Vijay Prashad, in his study "The Karma of Brown Folk," writes about the roots of this detachment in Indian-Americans:

> We are . . . seen as spiritual beings who are pliant and cooperative—those willing allies sought by Columbus, allies now not only against Islam but against those who are deemed by the power elite to be the current foes of U.S. civilization, black Americans. . . . The immigrants are good; the blacks are bad. Punish the latter. And many South Asian Americans applaud. . . . South Asian Americans prefer to detach themselves from the minutiae of democracy and to attach themselves solely to the task of capital accumulation. All the while, there is a sentiment that we will be praised by white supremacy and left alone to do our own work at society's margins.

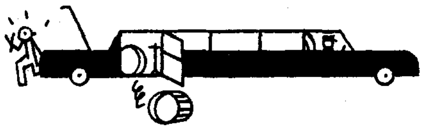
Naipaul, like the Indians Prashad writes about, is too busy being a “good immigrant” to recognize the falsity of his own “whiteness.”

A prodigious student but not a naturally gifted writer, Naipaul admits, in “Reading & Writing” (1999), that his ambitions, which began when he was eleven, were “for many years a kind of sham. I liked to be given a fountain pen and a bottle of Waterman ink and new ruled exercise books (with margins), but I had no wish or need to write anything; and didn’t write anything, not even letters: there was no one to write them to. . . . I wished to be a writer. But together with the wish there had come the knowledge that the literature that had given me the wish came from another world, far away from our own.” Naipaul could not write about the place he knew because the place he knew was not the place that fed the literature he most admired, the literature of the British Empire. He could only play the role of a writer, and, when he did so, he played the writer he planned to become—an English one.

England has been his home, more or less, for fifty-three years now, and one of his goals as a writer has been to continue the tradition of British travel writing. Along the way, he has done more than he set out to do. He has created an influential voice for colored travel writing—a way of both being and not being a part of the Third World he describes—which other black West Indian writers have emulated. But Naipaul himself had no models. His only examples were Englishmen such as George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh, who could go out into the world, to Paris, to Burma, and always have their homeland as a point of reference, a standard of identity. Naipaul didn’t want Trinidad as a point of reference; it carried little distinction for him. The traditionally “picturesque” way of writing about Indians in the Caribbean seemed to him to “distort and trivialise . . . because it indicates a special attitude towards yourselves: it says that you don’t consider yourselves really serious people . . . that the place you inhabit is only a kind of bongo paradise.” In his introduction to “East Indians in the Caribbean,” a series of papers presented at the University of the West Indies in 1975, he wrote, “A book has just been published in which an Anglo-American television man ‘introduces’ the island and introduces articles about the island, mainly by local people. . . . It indicates how strong and ineradicable the wish is, among the bongo islanders, to act up to the tourist image. . . . England is selling itself, its history, its achievements. Trinidad sells only its ‘picturesqueness,’ its ‘cosmopolitan’ population, and such tourist concepts harden simplicities and ignorance.” Between the master narrative of Englishness (Forster in India, Orwell in Spain) and the blank page of the West Indies, Naipaul chose the former. But, in doing so, he chose a page that was just as blank, because England was not really his to choose. His absorption of the country’s history, with its exhausted imperialism, its entrenched class system, only hampered his work; writing in a voice that wasn’t his own, Naipaul simply confirmed his difference.

Naipaul’s latest collection of essays, “The Writer and the World” (Knopf; $30), some of which appeared in this magazine, is fat (five hundred and twenty-four pages) with information, details, and accounts that range across three decades of Naipaul’s writing life, but its intellectual curiosity remains oddly limited. Naipaul relies too much on the reporter’s tools—description, quotation, narrative—while rarely questioning why he is where he is. For most of the book, he’s just there, writing it all down, his pen dipped in a kind of imperialist “I told you so,” particularly when any question of the African diaspora arises. The Indian novelist and essayist Pankaj Mishra, who edited the collection, refers in his introduction to the characters who populate the essays as “unsettled men with peasant or tribal backgrounds.” What follows is ample evidence of Naipaul’s dismissive approach toward everything “peasant” and “tribal”—which is to say, black, poor, illiterate, and backward, as far as one can get from the educated Europeans of his dreams. Consider the first paragraph of “A New King of the Congo: Mobutu and the Nihilism of Africa”:

> The Congo, which used to be a Belgian colony, is now an African kingdom and is called Zaire. It appears to be a nonsense name, a sixteenth-century Portuguese corruption, some Zairois will tell you, of a local word for “river.” So it is as if Taiwan, reasserting its Chinese identity, were again to give itself the Portuguese name Formosa. The Congo River is now called the Zaire, as is the local currency, which is almost worthless.



There is plenty of disdain here, but where is the history of colonialism? How did the Belgians get to the Congo? And why is the faded identity of a people who, for centuries, have been colonized and bastardized by a European nation a subject of ridicule?

As Naipaul writes in an autobiographical essay in “Finding the Center: Two Narratives” (1984), he is not interested in facts per se. He’d rather chase his own preconceptions: “I follow a thread till I find something that I was looking for. When I find it I stop.” Whether he is in Tehran or British Guyana, he is not a journalist but a fiction writer who travels. He has little inclination for historical analysis, and he makes sweeping generalizations where specificity might help. In a review of “Finding the Center,” Joan Didion noted, “What interests a writer like . . . Naipaul is only rarely what interests, in the same situation, a reporter. For one thing, whether the project at hand is fiction or reportage, the novelist’s interest in the situation wanes at that precise point when the reporter begins to consider himself competent: when the place is understood.”

But, happily, when Naipaul strays from both blacks and Indians his real gifts come through, without prejudicial limitations. “Argentina and the Ghost of Eva Perón, 1972-1991,” some of which first appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, begins:

> Outline it like a story by Borges.
>
> The dictator is overthrown and more than half the people rejoice. The dictator had filled the jails and emptied the treasury. Like many dictators, he hadn’t begun badly. He had wanted to make his country great. But he wasn’t himself a great man; and perhaps the country couldn’t be made great. Seventeen years pass. The country is still without great men; the treasury is still empty; and the people are on the verge of despair. They begin to remember that the dictator had a vision of the country’s greatness, and that he was a strong man; they begin to remember that he had given much to the poor. The dictator is in exile. The people begin to agitate for his return. The dictator is now very old. But the people also remember the dictator’s wife. She loved the poor and hated

> the rich, and she was young and beautiful. So she has remained, because she died young, in the middle of the dictatorship. And, miraculously, her body has not decomposed.
>
> "That," Borges said, "is a story I could *never* write."

In "V. S. Naipaul: An Introduction to His Work" (1972), Paul Theroux refers to Naipaul's famously brisk sentences and the fact that he appears to have no literary influences. Naipaul's most consistent technical influence, however, has been the cinema, with its flatness of exposition and its innovation in detail through character, costume, light, and shading. ("The old films stood out," he told the *Times* in 2001, after he set himself a course in cinema that required him to watch more than a hundred videos. "They're great films: their social concerns, their intelligence, the directorial authority, the lack of showing off. . . . It was the great medium of the 20th century. These were the masters, and their films are little miracles of art.") This borrowing accounts for the technical greatness of "Eva Perón." Reading the piece, with its admixture of news and irony, one is reminded also of the gossip heard on street corners in the West Indies: lively, trenchant, and pitiless, it centers, generally, on money and religion and dashed hopes. Naipaul writes in a variety of voices, but this is his most evocative. Look at how deftly he draws the portrait of Argentina:

> The peso has gone to hell: from 5 to the dollar in 1947, to 16 in 1949, 250 in 1966, 400 in 1970, 420 in June last year [1971], 960 in April this year, 1,100 in May. . . . Premiums rise and claims fall. When prices gallop away week by week, fires somehow do not often get started.
>
> For everyone else it is a nightmare. . . .
>
> The return of Perón, or the triumph of Peronism, is anticipated. It has been estimated that already between six and eight thousand million dollars have been shipped out of the country by Argentines. "People are not involved," the ambassador's wife says. "And you must remember that anybody who has money is not an Argentine. Only people who don't have money are Argentines."
>
> But even at the level of wealth and security, even when escape plans have been drawn up, even, for instance, at this elegant dinner party in the Barrio Norte, passion breaks in. "I'm *dying*," the lady says abruptly, clenching her fists. "I'm dying—I'm dying—I'm dying. It isn't a life any longer. Everybody clinging on by their fingertips. This place is *dead*. Sometimes I just go to bed after lunch and stay there." The elderly butler wears white gloves; all the panelling in the room was imported from France at the turn of the century. (How easy and quick this Argentine aristocracy, how brief its settled life.) "The streets are dug up, the lights are dim, the telephones don't answer." The marijuana (forty-five dollars for the last half-kilo) passes; the mood does not alter. "This used to be a great city and a great port. Twenty years ago. Now it's fucked up, baby."

What Naipaul understands here is his subject's desire to be something other than itself—to be not the poor, dying country it is, its indigenous people murdered, its pampas depleted, but a rich, wood-panelled nation. The Argentines' resentment at their loss is Naipaul's own resentment at belonging to a culture that has never had any fixed identity, and whose riches have been plundered by the Europeans. Only in a country that is not entangled with his own can Naipaul confront head on the workings of colonialism.

Still, to make any conclusive statement about Naipaul is to risk making a fool of oneself. There is simply too much writing to encompass. Naipaul's ambivalence about identity—his own and others'—confounds, frustrates, and enlightens. His relentless focus on man making a mess of his own humanity limits his scope. But at times he does deal with that ambivalence in startling ways, and, misguided or not, he has always been a trickster. Like most tricksters, he changes shape and color at will, the better not to be seen in the environment he wants to disrupt. As George Lamming points out, West Indian writers have always had to get out:

> How has it come about that a small group of men, different in years and temperament and social origins, should leave the respective islands they know best, even exchange life there for circumstances which are almost wholly foreign to them? . . . And what . . . is the range of their ambition as writers whose nourishment is now elsewhere, whose absence is likely to drag into a state of permanent separation from their roots?

Naipaul left the West Indies in order to write about it. And when he wrote about it, or about places that reminded him of it, he described a conundrum, a place that generated both nostalgia and repulsion, both love and hate. Naipaul's material has been provided most consistently by regions of despair. It is in these places that he can feel at home, can pick up where he left off: in Trinidad, where, a West Indian Brer Rabbit, he works his briar patch among the "bongo islanders" who made him. ♦

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BOOKS

LOVE CRAZY

In Scott Spencer's new novel, passion has its price.

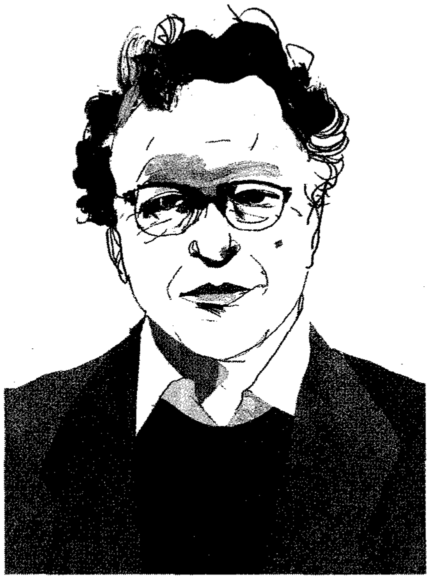
BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

Idealism, hubris, and hypomania in about equal measure characterize the thirty-six-year-old protagonist of Scott Spencer's new novel, "A Ship Made of Paper" (Ecco; $24.95), who embarks upon a reckless love affair with a young wife and mother:

> History in one corner and Love in the other? Fine. Ring the bell. Let the fight begin. *Love,* he thinks, *will bring history to its knees.*

By "history," Daniel Emerson means the rift between the races—he is white, and she is black—which is a consequence of slavery in America; by "love" he means the intensity of the passion he feels for Iris Davenport, no matter what the consequences for others.

The funny-romantic boast of the bluesy song "Just to Be with You" ("On a ship that's made of paper / I would sail the seven seas") is the unspoken mantra of mock-heroic Daniel Emerson, whose romantic yearnings precipitate a Grand Guignol of seriocomic happenings. Daniel, who has moved back to the place of his birth—the fictitious Hudson Valley town of Leyden, New York—is a richly drawn character, alternately exasperating and appealing, a good-natured, tirelessly smiling, and affable adult with the emotional needs of a child. His transcendental yearnings, if not his intellectual capacities, are of the scale of Ralph Waldo Emerson's. Daniel will remind some readers of those hapless characters in Iris Murdoch's novels who fall in love—blissfully and brainlessly—with strikingly emblematic individuals whom they scarcely know. In Daniel's case, the object of his infatuation is a newcomer to Leyden and one of very few African-Americans in the area. She is a part-time graduate student in American studies who brings her four-year-old son to the same day-care center where Daniel brings his partner's four-year-old daughter. Daniel, having "all his life . . . been in love with black women—Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday, Irma Thomas, Ivie Anderson, Ella Fitzgerald, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith," quickly seduces Iris, who feels underappreciated in her marriage to an ambitious Wall Street investment banker and who has doubts about her own intelligence and worth. "If there's no one around," Iris says, "I just say what I'm thinking . . . 'I'm in love. I'm in love with a man who thinks I'm smart and beautiful.'"



Scott Spencer

RICCARDO VECCHIO

The borders of Scott Spencer's expertly portrayed Leyden (the author lives in Rhinebeck) are contiguous with Cheever country, to the south, and Updike country, to the northeast. Like John Cheever, Spencer has imagined for his suburban dreamers and infatuated lovers melodramatic crises that verge upon the surreal; like John Updike, Spencer is a poet-celebrant of Eros, lyrically precise in his descriptions of lovers' fantasies, lovers' lovemaking, lovers' bodies. Spencer is neither as playfully sadistic with his characters nor as magical in his prose as Cheever, and his writerly skills are perhaps less dazzling than Updike's, but his narrative voice is zestful and unpredictable. "A Ship Made of Paper" is a wild ride that lurches and swerves and floats. There is an inspired three-page threnody that begins, "It was snowing and it was snowing and it was going to snow some more," and contains a concatenation of weather-related mishaps that might have been illustrated by Edward Gorey. There is a grotesquely protracted interlude in a dense woods in which Daniel and Hampton, Iris's cuckolded husband—thrown together as a pair in a quixotic search for a runaway blind girl—wander about lost, and discover how much they dislike each other ("Daniel?" "What?" "Can I make a suggestion?" "Sure. What?" "Go fuck yourself"), all culminating in an accident caused by Daniel's carelessness which leaves Hampton a permanent invalid. And there are, scattered through the novel, outbursts of slightly deranged rapture from Daniel's perspective, such as these (fortunately unspoken) words addressed to the woman with whom Daniel lives and whom he has betrayed:

> Have you ever made love for six hours barely stopping? Have you ever had nine orgasms in a night? Have you ever seen me weep from the sight of your beauty? When was the last time we slept in each other's arms? Have you ever seen my savage side? Have you ever known me to be absolutely helpless with passion? Has anyone ever stuck their tongue up your ass? Have you risked disgrace for me? Have you made a double life and been willing to hurt another person for the love of me?

Daniel's fevered state is matched by the novel's antic plot, which rolls forward, backward, sideways. We learn that Daniel was the only child of a husband-and-wife team of chiropractors who had him in middle age and seemed never to have especially wanted him—and who surprise Daniel early in the novel by announcing that they have changed their will and are no longer leaving their estate to him but to a county raptor center. ("This is in no way meant to indicate what our feelings are for you, Dan. You're our son.") We learn that Daniel had to give up a lucrative law practice in Manhattan, after he lost a pro-bono case defending a black drug dealer, whose associates blamed Daniel for the defeat, beat him, and threatened to kill him. We learn that Daniel's fatal weakness for falling in love—that phenomenon of emotional life described with clinical chill by Sigmund Freud as "sexual over-estimation"—began in his lonely adolescence:

> Around and around he'd gone, and now it seemed to be coming to this: that phantom female, that ghostly girl, Darlin', Baby, all those creatures of his longing, all those spirits of love and desire whom he thought he had exorcised with the power of plain old common sense, put in their place at the back of the class by irony, experience, and practicality, they had survived after all, they had not been cast out, they had merely shrunk back, they had hibernated, and they have fused into a single woman.

Spencer's eighth novel, "A Ship Made of Paper" might be read as a tragicomic middle-aged reimagining of the adolescent obsessions of his 1979 best-seller, "Endless Love." (Recall its protagonist, the Chicago teen-ager David Axelrod, who ends up burning down the house of his teen-age lover and provoking the death of her father.) Because the issue of race in contemporary American society tends to eclipse all other issues, though, "A Ship Made of Paper" will probably be discussed primarily in those terms. Kate Ellis, the acerbic-tongued writer from whom Daniel is estranged, sums up Daniel's preoccupation with Iris: "You always wanted to be black, and now you've figured out a way to be black by proxy." Iris confesses to Daniel, shortly before they become lovers, "I'm really getting *tired* of being African-American. I always thought of myself as just me . . . I'm just exhausted by it, it's so much *work* being black. And no days off, either. And the pay stinks."

The most relentlessly satirized character in the book is Hampton, a preppy snob who condescends to his darker-skinned wife yet is furious when Caucasians condescend to him. Unlike the flawed but fully realized Iris, Hampton is rather more a caricature, punished by fate in the form of the clumsy Daniel Emerson. "He really and truly wishes I was lighter," Iris says of her husband:

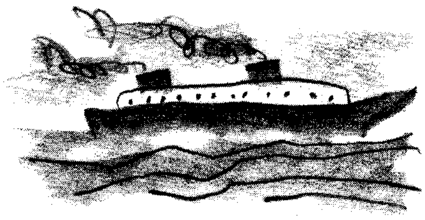
> And the really strange part of it is Hampton is obsessed with being black, he's black twenty-four hours a day, it's all he thinks about. He sort of dislikes white people, but at the same time he's like most of us: He really wants white people to like *him*. And that, by the way, is the dirty little secret of the Africans in America. We really want y'all to like us.

Daniel's response to this is childlike, impulsively uttered, nonretractable: "I love you." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

What Liberal Media?, *by Eric Alterman (Basic; $25).* Alterman, a columnist for *The Nation*, says that, to the extent that the liberal media still exists, "I work in the middle of it, and so do many of my friends. And guess what? It's filled with right-wingers." His thesis, a response to recent books by the conservatives Ann Coulter and Bernard Goldberg, is that liberal media outlets take pains to feature opinion from all across the political spectrum (and are in some cases veering rightward); meanwhile, the right-wing media—a well-funded empire of radio stations, TV shows, and magazines—pursues an overtly partisan agenda. A polemic is nothing without passion, and Alterman's argumentative vigor is engaging, although his focus sometimes drifts, and he can happily spend an entire paragraph upbraiding Howard Kurtz for having said that William Kristol's being a Mets fan proves him to be "contrarian." Like most media commentators, Alterman probably overestimates the influence of media commentators, but the meticulous care with which his arguments are sourced and footnoted is in commendable contrast to the efforts of some of his more fire-breathing conservative opponents.

Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics, *by Frederic Spotts (Overlook; $37.50).* There is something refreshing about the deadpan tone that Spotts brings to his book on Hitler the artist. He has no grand theory to push, and pronounces his subject merely "interesting." At times, he takes understatement too far, as when he mentions the "occasional shrillness" of Hitler's oratory. But his study of the Führer's fascination with architecture, painting, sculpture, and music is for the most part elegantly composed and richly documented. Spotts says that Hitler was less of an idiot in these matters than biographers have implied, and that his dilettantish expertise made him all the more destructive; he could hypnotize a man such as Richard Strauss with his mastery of trivia. Still, Spotts never really confronts the horror at the center of his story: the fact that Hitler not only knew the arts but made a religion of them, and probably believed in nothing else.



Waiting for Snow in Havana, *by Carlos Eire (Free Press; $25).* At the start of the nineteen-sixties, an operation called Pedro Pan flew more than fourteen thousand Cuban children out of the country, without their parents, and deposited them in Miami. Eire, now a professor of history and religion at Yale, was one of them. His deeply moving memoir describes his life before Castro, among the aristocracy of old Cuba—his father, a judge, believed himself to be the reincarnation of Louis XVI—and, later, in America, where he turned from a child of privilege into a Lost Boy. Eire's tone is so urgent and so vividly personal (he is even nostalgic about Havana's beautiful blue clouds of DDT) that his unsparing indictments of practically everyone concerned, including himself, seem all the more remarkable.

The Usual Rules, *by Joyce Maynard (St. Martin's; $24.95).* It is a sign of Maynard's somewhat gauche good-heartedness that she has already produced this novel about September 11th. The protagonist, Wendy, is a thirteen-year-old girl who has just begun to rebel against her mother. The mother goes to work in the World Trade Center, and doesn't come home; Wendy is left with a load of inchoate guilt and misery, a devoted stepfather, an adored half brother, and a father in California, who, after years of neglect, is suddenly interested in her. Wendy flees to her father and spreads love the way Johnny Appleseed planted trees. The idea is that this heals her. Minor characters—a San Francisco waif in search of his brother, a teen-age mother, a bookshop owner with an autistic son—endure less heartwarming outcomes, but Maynard's overriding impulse is palliative.

MUSICAL EVENTS

MAVERICKS

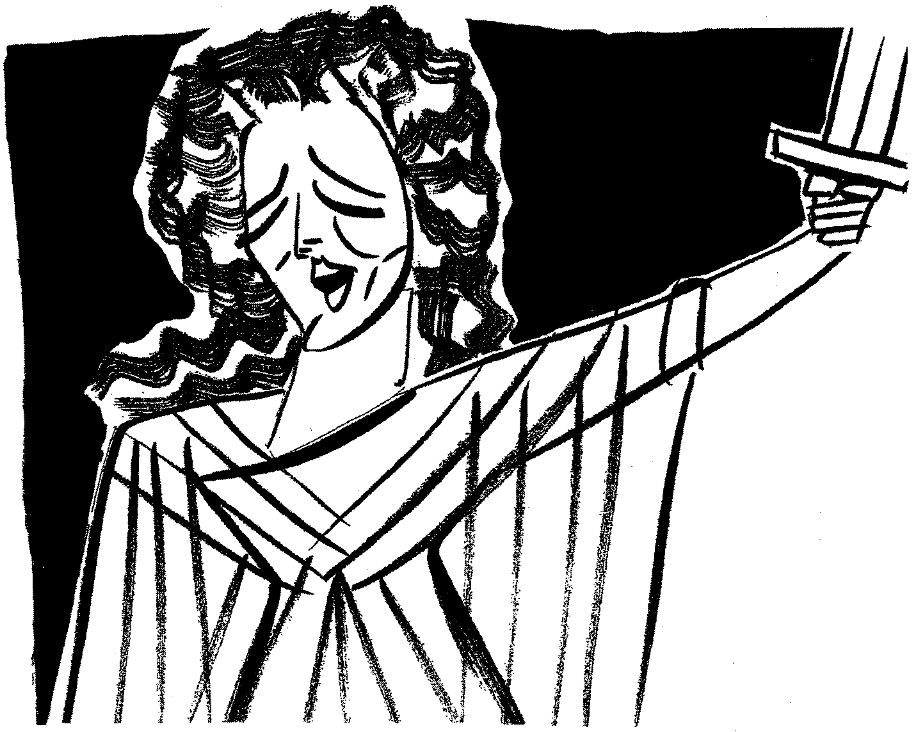
Lou Harrison passes on; Berlioz returns.

BY ALEX ROSS

The composer Lou Harrison, who died on February 2nd, at the age of eighty-five, described himself not long ago as "an old man who's had a lot of fun." He was a great deal more than that, though what posterity will make of him is difficult to say. A roly-poly guy who reminded everyone of a sun-kissed Santa Claus, Harrison seemed for a long time to be the only happy composer in America; unlike so many of his congenitally embittered ivory-tower colleagues, he not only accepted his marginal status in the nation's culture but revelled in it. Yet he was, in many ways, an imposing figure—at once the prophet of the minimalist movement and the last vital representative of the mighty populist generation led by Aaron Copland. His music was so spare in design as to seem naïve, but it was not simple, and he was not a simple man.

Harrison—I have an urge to call him Lou, though I never met him—tends to be categorized as the quintessential West Coast composer, an accurate enough description. He was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1917, and moved to the Bay Area as a boy. After a troubled stint in New York, during which he befriended Charles Ives, he returned to Northern California in 1953. He spent the last forty years of his life outside Santa Cruz, in a house overlooking the Pacific. He had many of the characteristics that you would expect to find in a man who lived in the vicinity of Santa Cruz: he wore a ponytail, he hated war, he was fascinated by non-Western cultures, he collected found objects and played them as percussion instruments. He spoke Esperanto fluently and set several texts in that language. He was unashamed of being a gay man, and proclaimed it even back in the fifties.

But hippy-dippy clichés do not suffice. Harrison also belonged to the California of the mind—to the high horizon of the national imagination, the limitless expanse that Emerson hailed and Melville feared, what Wallace Stevens named the American Sublime, the "empty spirit in vacant space." There was much merriment in Harrison's work, much hummable song and rollicking dance; but there were also dark, questing rivers of chant, machinelike ostinatos, erupting dissonances, enveloping silences. He had a rumbling, visionary side—this must have been the basis of his connection with the crusty Ives. It must also have caught the attention of Arnold Schoenberg, who taught Harrison in Los Angeles, and bestowed on him rare praise. "Use only the essentials," Schoenberg always said. Probably against the grain of what the Master intended, Harrison took this as permission to vacate the overcrowded city space of modern music, to camp out in a desert landscape of long drones and mesmeric patterns.



Lorraine Hunt Lieberson sings Dido with the gravity of a Baroque lament.

TOM BACHTELL

During the week before Harrison's death, the Juilliard School held a celebration of the composer's eighty-fifth birthday. I attended the last event in the series, a concert by the Juilliard Symphony, under the direction of Reinbert de Leeuw. I went mostly to hear de Leeuw, one of the unheralded great conductors of our time, who drew fireworks of sound from the student players. But the revelation was the "Elegiac Symphony," a grand, cryptic work that I had heard before but never really understood: it was like walking over an ordinary hill and discovering a secret ocean. I went home and began revisiting recordings of Harrison's music, of which there are many on the New Albion and CRI labels. While listening to "Rhymes with Silver," a luminous ballet for cello and ensemble, I received an e-mail from a West Coast colleague saying that Harrison had died suddenly of a heart attack, on his way to a festival of his music in Ohio. He was probably having a gay old time right up to the end. So long, Lou.

Hector Berlioz, who celebrates his two-hundredth birthday this year, was the godfather of all composers who go their own way. Having released the Romantic torrent in music with his still astounding "Symphonie Fantastique," he proceeded to go against the stream of his own revolution and adopt a refined, neoclassical manner. With "The Trojans," a five-act grand opera based on the Aeneid, he aimed to resurrect the high-flown lyric tragedy of Gluck; when the Paris Opera refused to stage the work, in 1863, Berlioz fell into a black funk that lasted until his death six years later. The Metropolitan Opera has mounted a new production of this unlucky masterpiece, heralding a citywide, yearlong tribute to the composer's bicentennial. A Lincoln Center festival, "Fantastic Voyages," begins in early March; "The Trojans" plays at the Met through March 27th.

It is a long, strange, uneven, and, in the end, hugely moving work. To strike home, it needs three furiously committed star singers and a conductor who breathes the idiom. In this respect, the Met has come up short, although a half-baked "Trojans" is still a feast. The only participant who seemed to be dwelling deep inside Berlioz's world was Lorraine Hunt Lieberson; as the love-drunk Dido, she delivered a tour de force of style and emotion. She is the closest thing we have to a Callas—an artist of supreme intelligence who is also a transfixing presence onstage. From the moment she made her entrance, you understood what Berlioz was trying to achieve: she gave those cool, hieratic vocal lines the detailed gravity of a Baroque lament, marking out the metrical heartbeat of the music while giving each syllable a precise expressive value. There were shaky moments at the beginning—she sometimes shrieked at the end of a phrase, as if the high notes were mice—but for the most part she mastered a role that many opera buffs had deemed too heavy for her. The lady can sing anything, including the blues.

Ben Heppner played Aeneas, Dido's workaholic, unavailable lover. The formerly bulbous Canadian tenor has lost some eighty pounds and looks like a completely different man. When last seen at the Met, in "Die Meistersinger," he had the air of one on the brink of disaster, which followed soon enough, when he lost his voice during a recital in Toronto. Now he sings with renewed confidence, and, despite a pair of cracked high notes, he conquered the ludicrously difficult Act V solo scene. But I worried about the break between the middle and the top of the voice: there, the notes had a sagging, smudgy quality. Perhaps this uncertainty of tone stemmed from a passing spell of nervousness, for reputable sources raved about his singing a few nights later. No such troubles for Deborah Voigt, the Cassandra: she sang with such golden, glowing strength that one hardly minded her all-purpose arm-waving and mismatched Wagnerian delivery. Dwayne Croft was a muted but affecting Coroebus; Elena Zaremba, a robust Anna; Robert Lloyd, a rock-steady Narbal. Two superlative lyric tenors, Matthew Polenzani and Gregory Turay, stood out in smaller roles. Polenzani sang Iopas' aria "Ô blonde Cérès" with a calm mastery of French style, spinning out a sinuous, unbroken line.

Opening nights at the Met seldom show a production to best advantage, and Berlioz's five-hour monster had a wobbly start. The Met chorus sang with lusty power but with no great beauty of tone. James Levine led a curiously absent-minded performance, hurried in places and static in others. It sounded as though only certain choice passages, such as the end of Act IV, had been thoroughly rehearsed. Perhaps Levine was distracted by the frenzy of what was happening onstage: Francesca Zambello, the director, working with set designs by the late Maria Bjørnson, filled the room with fractured fortress walls, dangling segments of domes, Damien Hirst fish tanks, parades and processions, ritual objects being earnestly carried to and fro, squads of dancers rushing to catch up with the music (shades of the "dance impressions" that sometimes enliven the Oscars), tenors floating in on swings, a subcompact Trojan horse, and so on. Some tableaux had a serene, composed beauty—James Ingalls bathed the outdoor scenes in his patented pale sunlight—but the net effect was cold and obscure, as if these Trojans were still trapped in a marble frieze. Once again, the Met has offered a glittering production with no strong dramatic core.

Franz Welser-Möst, the new music director of the supremely virtuosic Cleveland Orchestra, is a forty-two-year-old Austrian whose tastes and talents are little known to American audiences. Curly-haired and bespectacled, he bears a charming resemblance to Schubert. The heir to George Szell and Christoph von Dohnányi recently led the Cleveland in three concerts at Carnegie Hall, and the two that I heard were wildly inconsistent, which makes it hard to predict how the alliance will turn out. Beethoven's C-Sharp-Minor Quartet, in an arrangement for string orchestra by Dimitri Mitropoulos, lumbered along in slow motion, striving for the tragic and achieving the lugubrious. Mahler's gloriously whacked-out Seventh Symphony made a brilliant sound but lacked passion and wit, as if Welser-Möst were standing back and watching the music go by. Too often in today's younger conductors, one encounters this kind of affectless expertise; the week before, David Robertson and the National Orchestra of Lyon had presented a veritable autopsy of "The Rite of Spring."

After the intermission of the first concert, a different Welser-Möst walked out, and ignited a happy riot in the audience. Two Richard Strauss works were played in sequence, the C-major ending of "Death and Transfiguration" melting magically into the C minor of "Frühling," from "Four Last Songs." The orchestra was aglow and alive, sounding as fine as I have ever heard it. The relationship of solos to ensemble had the quality of cinematic deep focus, foreground and background perfectly defined. Felicity Lott sang the "Four Last Songs" and "Morgen" with immense dignity and heartbreaking directness; like Hunt Lieberson in "The Trojans," she didn't so much sing the music as embody it. The orchestra breathed, sighed, and smiled with her. If Welser-Möst can create this transcendent atmosphere in one out of every three concerts, he will become a great conductor. ♦

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

At last, the lip service that education has been lathered in for the past couple decades seems to have found the razor's edge among people who are willing to do something about improving it here, at the elementary level all the way up through public universities. But as budgets continue to be shaved, will the arts once again be trimmed from the programming?

From the Urban Tulsa Weekly.

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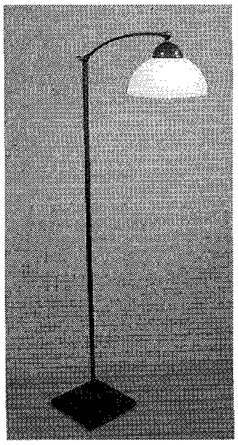

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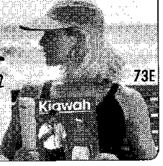

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

COMPROMISES

"The Life of David Gale" and "Daredevil."

BY DAVID DENBY

"The Life of David Gale" is one of those hyper-articulate messes which inspire awe and a kind of nauseated pity. This is no ordinary cock-up: this is a remarkably talented cock-up, made with wit and feeling and featuring a classic performance by a great actress, Laura Linney. But all the lovely acting and the high intelligence (a former philosophy professor named Charles Randolph wrote the script) have been poured into a stupid story that relies on the rusted mechanics of a routine thriller. The movie is plotted against the clock: David Gale (Kevin Spacey), a philosophy professor at the University of Austin and an anti-death-penalty advocate, has been convicted of murder. After sitting on death row for six years, Gale is about to be executed—in four days—and only the ace investigative reporter Bitsey Bloom (Kate Winslet) can save him. Alan Parker, who has made both good movies ("Shoot the Moon," "Birdy") and terrible ones ("The Road to Wellville," "Evita"), apparently knows no shame, because he gives us such jaw droppers as a rented car that overheats and stalls like a cranky burro just as Bitsey is rushing to prevent the execution. Holding the exculpatory evidence in her hands, Winslet then runs through the entire state of Texas—down roads, through towns, even across a graveyard planted with more white crosses than Flanders Field. She runs for Kevin Spacey's life.

We all know why such feeble stuff is there. It's what allows a major American studio (Universal) to persuade itself to finance a movie with a literate script. But, once you rely on such devices, you halfway kill the script and generally discredit the movie in the eyes of the audience it seems aimed at—an audience that could follow the academic references, the legal arguments, the moral sentiments so casually tossed off by the characters. The picture is practically an ad for the dysfunctions of the current system of making movies.

Bitsey Bloom is meant to be a kind of virtuous opportunist—a tough newsmagazine journalist with a good heart. The character has integrity (she's gone to jail for her beliefs), but Winslet, in a classic mistake, plays the role as if the slightest display of charm would compromise Bitsey's strength. Winslet is strenuous and beautiful, with a noble Victorian brow and a sharply cut mouth. Her eyes blazing, she has a startling vividness. But Winslet's anger is joined to a fatal lack of humor, and if she doesn't lighten up she could degenerate into the educated person's Demi Moore. The indomitable Bitsey heads out from her magazine's Park Avenue headquarters and pays Gale a half-million-dollar fee for a three-day interview leading up to the execution. Morose and wrathful, he was convicted of raping and murdering his close friend and colleague Constance Harraway (Laura Linney), a fellow-professor and anti-death-penalty activist. Did he really commit the crime? Or was he set up by right-wingers who wanted to destroy him?

As Gale tells his story to Bitsey, we get to see his earlier life, and some of the college-scene banter is fun. Gale, wearing denim, delivers a racy lecture on Jacques Lacan's theories of fantasy, and one of Gale's colleagues talks of using a "hermeneutical bias" to interpret Gale's collapsing marriage. The phrase may panic the malls ("Herman who?"), but the movie makes it abundantly clear what's happening to Gale. He hits the bottle, and recites naughty limericks at an uproarious student-teacher party. He's meant to be a good man without disci-

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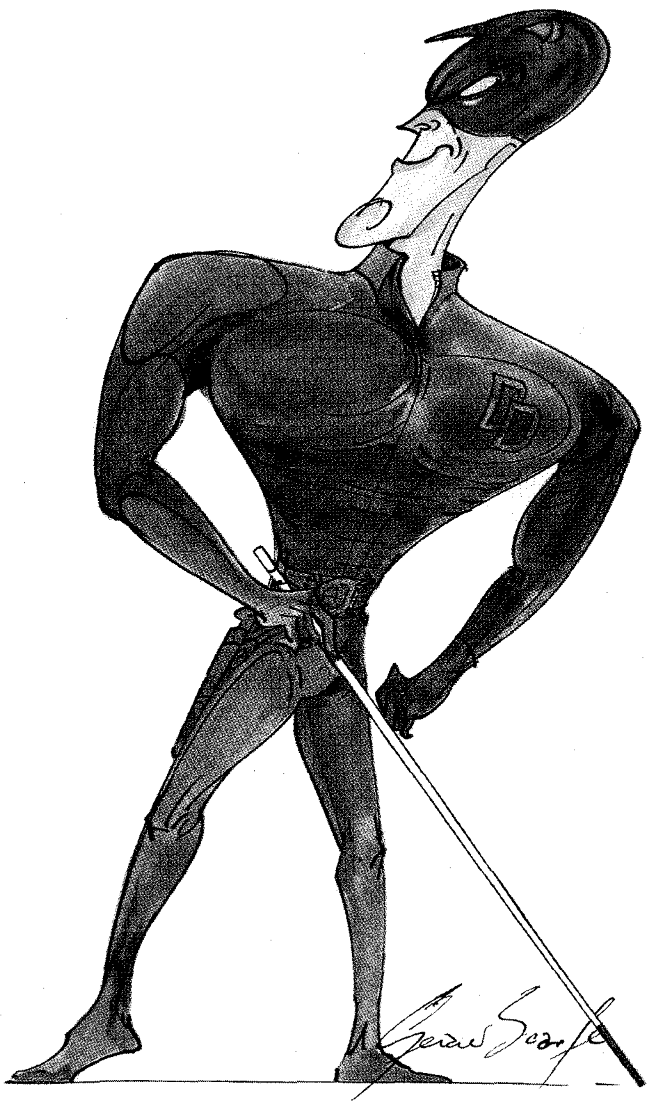
pline—a serious thinker and crusader who can't, or won't, pull himself together. Glassy-eyed, unshaven, his posture slack, Spacey goes all the way into his recent obsession with weak, stumbling characters. Here and there, he flounders so badly that one has to restrain a Maggie Thatcher impulse to shake him by the shoulders—"Buck *up* a bit, fellow!"—but it's a relief to see an American hero who is far from perfect. Spacey delivers bitterly intelligent, alcoholic lines as if he knew what they meant.

And Laura Linney lifts him out of the depths. Linney was amazing two years ago in "You Can Count on Me" as an ordinary small-town woman trying to get on with her life. Here she reverses direction, playing a woman devoted to others, a protest-movement workhorse obsessed with the prisoners on Texas's death row. With her blond hair now dark, her complexion pale, she captures the exacerbated hopes and chagrins of those who care too much, those who can never separate their emotions from their beliefs. In "David Gale," the flame of Texas liberalism, which has been known to flicker, burns brightly and steadily; in the middle of the thriller story, the movie offers sincere homage to the ragtag army of Texas dissidents who are revolted by the local fondness for lethal injections. The miracle of Linney's performance is that her anguish now and then gives way to a desperate gaiety. She's dying of leukemia, and she tells Gale that she doesn't have the patience or the interest to go through Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's celebrated stages of grief. She will not appreciate the blades of grass. The scene in which the dying woman and the drowning man reach out to each other is as touching as anything in "The Hours."

Alan Parker has a gift for intimacy, but he betrays it here. The movie is packed with information and attitudes that are almost impossible to sort out. Parker relies on a pretentious editing scheme in which sequences are bridged with whirling montages of classroom notes—"lust" and "innocence" and "guilt," the notes proclaim. "David Gale" turns into a murder mystery, a variant of the kind of puzzle in which a corpse is discovered in a locked room. On a videotape that suddenly shows up, we see the death itself—Constance, naked, a plastic bag over her head, dying of suffocation. The first time through, the tape is terrifying. By the third time, one begins to sicken slightly, even rebel against the exploitation of one's curiosity. Didn't Parker realize that, having built up all that feeling for Constance, he couldn't abuse her—or us—in such a way? This intelligent movie is no more than half-conscious. In the lengthy press notes for the picture, Alan Parker asserts that he is against the death penalty. The only trouble is, no one could determine his point of view from the movie itself. "David Gale" could easily be taken as an attack on anti-death-penalty activists—an exposure of the lengths they will go to make a point.



Ben Affleck plays a blind lawyer by day, a superhero by night.

GERALD SCARFE

When "David Gale" flops, Universal will be tempted to say something like "The audience wasn't ready for it." And my guess is that this line will be used as an argument against the next original project that comes along. Actually, the audience was quite ready. It's Universal that wasn't. The company should have straightened out this self-damaging project before shooting began. If I'm not mistaken, that's one of the things executives and producers are paid seven-figure salaries to do.

"Daredevil," the new comic-book spectacular, has exactly one good scene. Ben Affleck, as a blind lawyer who becomes a superhero by night, meets Jennifer Garner, playing an heiress and martial-arts expert, and follows her; the two then get to know each other by fighting in a city park—spinning, kicking,and jumping, with a flapping seesaw as a prop. Much of the rest of "Daredevil" is so dark that you can't see it. I don't think you're missing a great deal. The movie is derivative, flat, halfhearted, its squareness unrelieved by irony or fantasy. Affleck, in his maroon jumpsuit, flips from nowhere to nowhere in a black-on-black digital New York that seems based on sketches rejected by the creators of the first "Batman." In last year's "Changing Lanes," Affleck woke up as an actor, but in "Daredevil" he tries for a light-voiced, unemphatic presence, and he registers no more powerfully than he did in "Pearl Harbor." In these big movies, he seems a put-on movie star, a lazybones puffed by enormous helium bursts of publicity. Is Affleck trying to save his reputation for cool among his friends by absenting himself from the huge structures built around him? There may be a future in such a tactic, but I doubt it. ♦

THE HEARTH

1

Alone after the news on a bitter
evening in the country, sleet slashing
the stubbled fields, the river ice;
I keep stirring up the recalcitrant fire,

but when I throw my plastic coffee cup
in with new kindling it perches intact
on a log for a strangely long time,
as though uncertain what to do,

until in a somehow reluctant, almost
creaturely way it dents, collapses,
and decomposes to a dark slime
untwining itself on the stone hearth.

I once knew someone who was caught in a fire
and made it sound something like that.
He'd been loading a bomber and a napalm shell
had gone off; flung from the flames,

at first he felt nothing, and thought
he'd been spared, but then came the pain,
then the hideous dark—he'd been blinded,
and so badly charred he spent years

in recovery: agonizing debridements,
grafts, learning to speak through a mouth
without lips, to read Braille with fingers
lavaed with scar, to not want to die . . .

Though that never happened. . . . He swore,
even years later, with a family,
that if he were back there, this time allowed
to put himself out of his misery, he would.

2

There was dying here tonight, after
dusk, by the road: an owl,
eyes fixed and flared, breast
so winter-white he seemed to shine

a searchlight on himself, helicoptered
near a wire fence, then suddenly
banked, plunged, and vanished
into the swallowing dark with his prey.

Such an uncomplicated departure;
no detonation, nothing to mourn;
if the creature being torn from its life
made a sound, I didn't hear it.

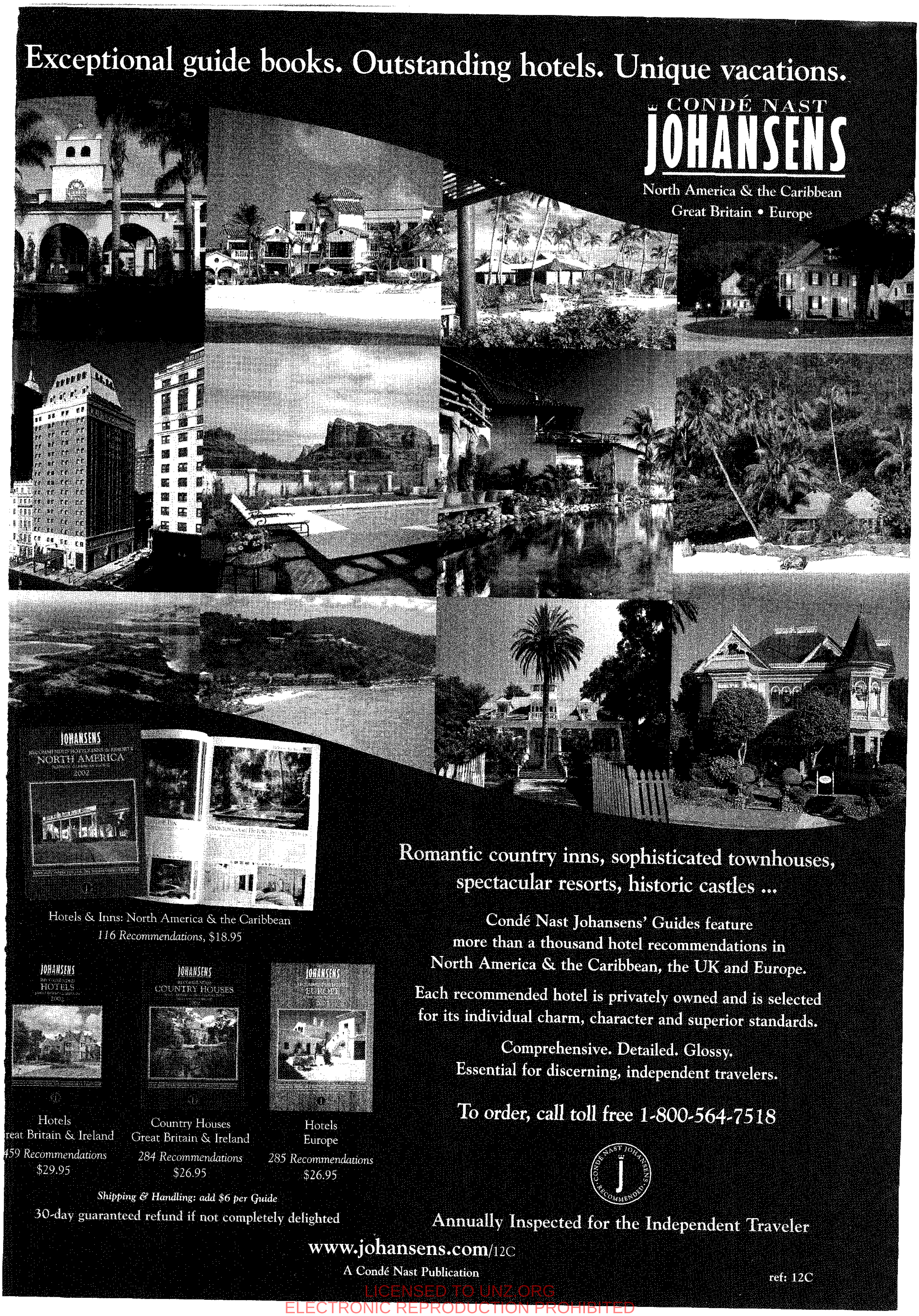
But in truth I wasn't listening, I was thinking,
as I often do these days, of war;
I was thinking of my children, and their children,
of the more than fear I feel for them,

and then of radar, rockets, shrapnel,
cities razed, soil poisoned
for a thousand generations; of suffering
so vast it nullifies everything else.

I stood in the wind in the raw cold
wondering how those with power over us
can effect such things, and by what
cynical reasoning pardon themselves.

The fire's ablaze now, its glow
on the windows makes the night even darker,
but it barely keeps the room warm.
I stoke it again, and crouch closer.

—*C. K. Williams*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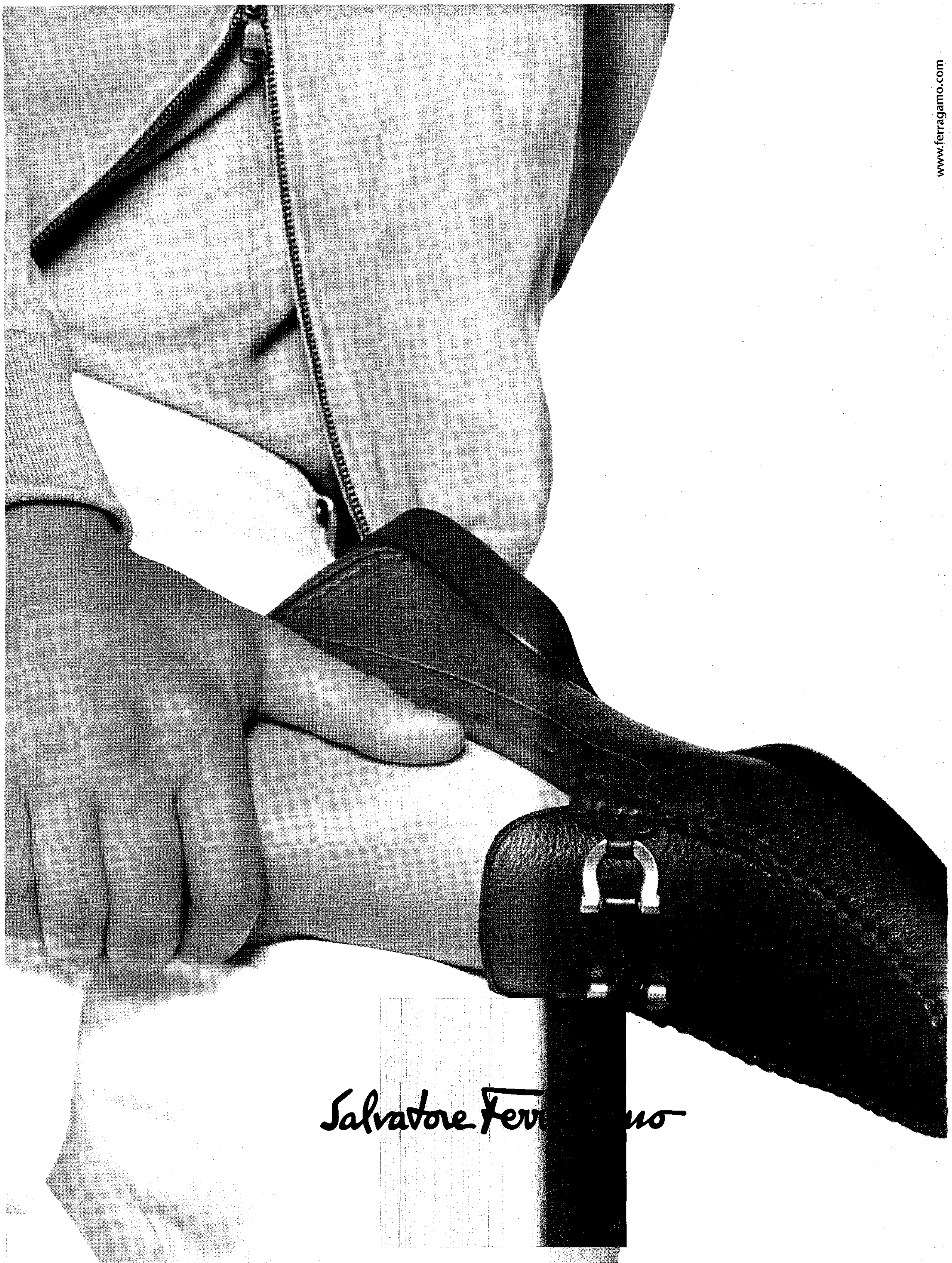

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